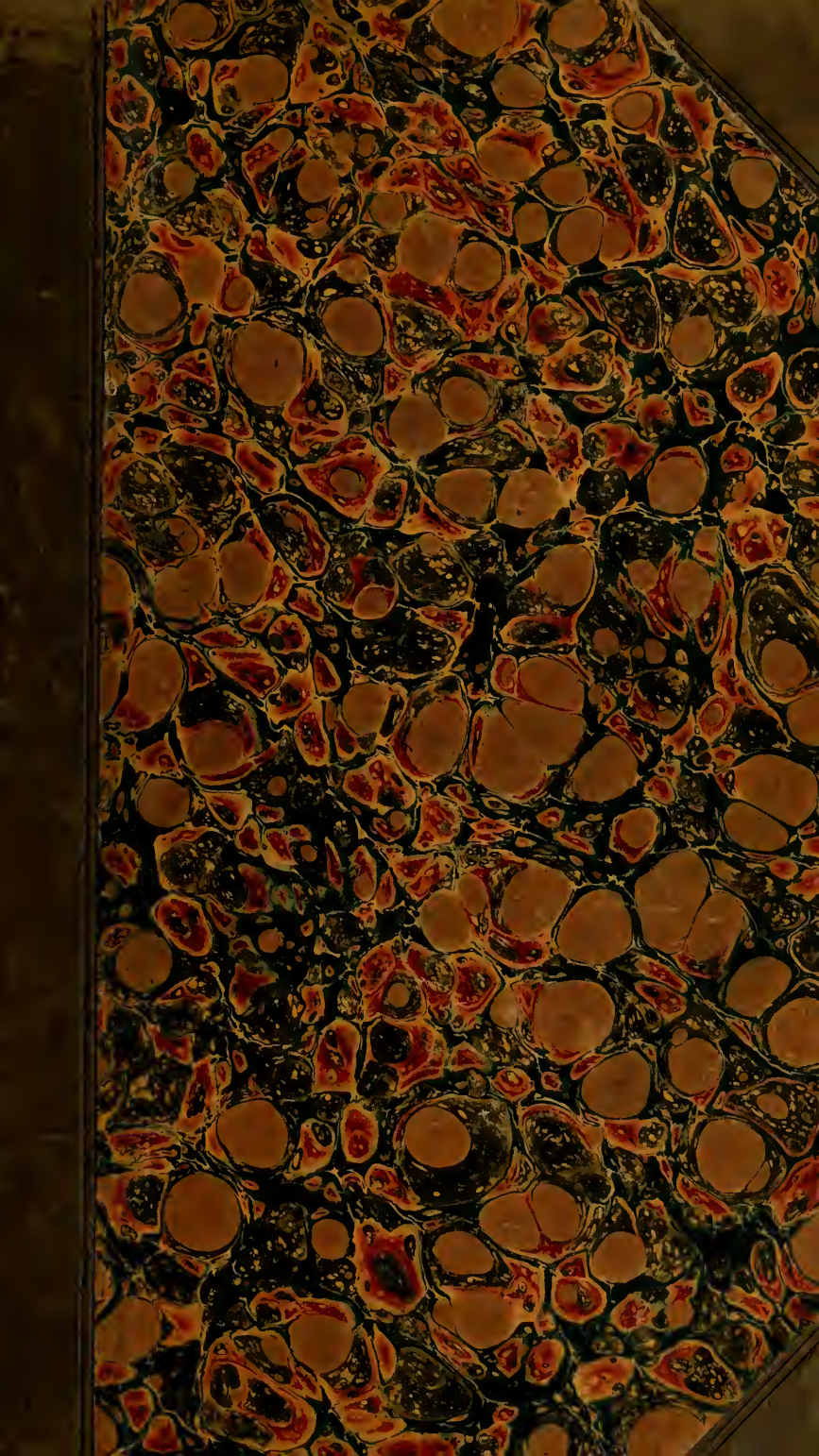






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CHURCH WORK AND CHURCH PROSPECTS.

Nov 1864.

A CHARGE

TO THE CLERGY OF THE DIOCESE

OF

GLOUCESTER AND BRISTOL,

AT HIS

PRIMARY VISITATION,

IN OCTOBER, 1864,

By C. J. ELLICOTT, D.D.

BISHOP OF GLOUCESTER AND BRISTOL.

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TO THE CLERGY
OF THE
DIOCESE OF GLOUCESTER AND BRISTOL,

This Charge.

IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED,

BY THEIR FAITHFUL FRIEND,

C. J. GLOUCESTER AND BRISTOL.

BRISTOL, OCTOBER, 1864.

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ERRATUM.

Page 17, line 28. Before *keep* insert *to*.

MY REVEREND BRETHREN,

§ 1. **I**T is with very mixed feelings *Introductory.* that I now address you. On the one hand I cannot but be conscious of the great responsibility that attaches itself to the words which, in the discharge of the solemn duties of my office, I am, for the first time, about to utter. I should be cold indeed in heart and self confident in spirit if I did not, thus at the very outset, ask for your mental prayers, that the spirit of love and truth may be vouchsafed to my words, and that I may be permitted to guide you into counsels of soberness and wisdom. Such prayers I well may ask for with all earnestness and humility. When I look round me and see, as I now see, so many labourers in the Lord's vineyard of wider and longer Christian experience than I can dare to lay claim to, I may well pause to think of the responsibility of speaking in the language of advice and exhortation to such an audience, I may well prepare my heart by a truer and more real feeling of my own insufficiency.

Yet, on the other hand, I will not deny that I feel within me a Christian cheerfulness, and even confidence, in the present attempt to perform one of the gravest duties of my office. I have been long enough among you to be sure of your sympathy at all times ; and I have only to look round me to receive the assurance that now, especially, it is not wanting. I see in your friendly faces the expressive tokens of the kindness that has been shown to me by all from the first hour of my coming among you down to the present time. I know too and feel that I am now receiving the support of the prayers of many and of the good wishes of all. Thus strengthened, then, and thus cheered, I will delay not to attempt the discharge of my present duty, and will now, without further preamble, lay before you the results of the many anxious thoughts, enquiries, and considerations that have been suggested by the various subjects of the present address.

General division of the subject. § 2. I will commence by stating the general division of the subjects which I have endeavoured to touch upon in the present charge.

In the first portion it is my desire to put before you fully and clearly the present state of our own diocese,—what has been done and what remains to be done,—our special local needs,—the organizations that may be improved or extended,—the irregularities that may be corrected,—everything, in fact, connected with home work which seems to

need more especial consideration at the present time.

After this survey of our own diocese, we may pass naturally and not unprofitably to a consideration of some of the more leading subjects and questions connected with the present state of the Church of Christ in this country; and then, lastly, we may pass from the Church of the present to the Church of the future, and endeavour, by the help of God's illuminating Spirit, to see and to consider whither the current of modern speculation is bearing us; what trials we have to prepare ourselves for; what dangers we have to anticipate; and, above all, what practical courses, whether in teaching or preaching, our gaze into the future seems to point out to us as the most hopeful and most salutary.

Thus what is merely local and present will pass, by natural sequence, into connexion with what is wide, general, and future. Present work, often done in quietness and seclusion, will thus be invested with its proper character and dignity, by being seen to stand in no doubtful relations with the great issues towards which every year of our lives seems bringing us nearer and nearer. Faithful individual effort, often under-estimated and often put forth under a sense of uncheered duty, will thus be felt to be more truly what it is,—an agency in the unfolding future of the whole Catholic Church; an agency honoured, rewarded, and blessed by being permitted to be instrumental in

hastening the kingdom of the coming Lord. Yes, dear brethren, every restored Church in our quiet valleys, every spire that adds a fresh feature to the plain, every school-church by the mine-side, every room opened for Christian teaching in the crowded city, every chapel in the suburb, every cottage-gathering in the hamlet on the wold,—all these results of individual faith and individual effort belong not merely to the present but to the future; all have their proper influence and potency amid the mighty workings, mightier, perhaps, now than ever, whereby the kingdoms of the world are becoming the kingdoms and heritage of Christ.

With these high thoughts in our hearts let us now enter upon the quiet details of the first portion of the subjects now before us, and consider, leisurely and carefully, Church work in our own Diocese,—what we now are doing and what we may do, existing arrangements and organizations, and the improvements and expansions of which those arrangements may seem to be capable, in a word, present realities, and future anticipations and hopes.

PART I.

LOCAL CHURCH WORK.

First, then, as to what we now are doing and the present state of Church-work in this varied and important Diocese.

Character- § 3. Varied indeed it is in its spiritual no less than its merely natural features ; and important, because so varied, because admitting and requiring so many different kinds and applications of christian work.

The more I meditate on our Diocese, and the more I traverse it, the more do I feel its plainly marked yet deeply interesting diversities. In the million acres contained in our limits what marked differences of country and population. When I pass in Gloucestershire from the plain in which I dwell to the hills on the one side of me or the forest on the other, I become at once sensible, not merely of changed natural features, but of varying influences and characteristics. I observe not only different habits but seem to feel that, to some extent, different spiritual workings are about me and around me, needing in each case different directions and guidance. When I turn south to the vale-lands of North Wiltshire I observe again in-

teresting differences enhanced in some degree by the natural gravitation, if I may so speak, of the laity towards the centre to which they politically belong, and towards which also many an ecclesiastical sympathy is still most blamelessly drawn by the influence of old habit and association.

Nor is it only in our rural populations that we may observe these diversities. They are, perhaps, even still more clearly defined in our urban populations. What real differences there are in the populations of the three great centres of town life in our diocese; and how much again these three centres, with their increasing numbers, and continuous aggregations, must at once be observed to differ from the old interesting country towns, with their usually diminishing populations, and sometimes seriously altered relations to the district of which they were once the natural centres and capitals.

I allude to all this that, in the estimate which I am about to make of christian work now done, and further, of work that has to be done, you may not only feel that I am myself by no means unconscious of the different kinds of spiritual workings that are needful among us, but also that you may be prepared to make proper allowance and deduction for general comments, which, to be profitable, may have to be much modified in their application to particular portions of the diocese.

General Statistics of the Diocese. § 4. From the returns which you have made to me, and for which I am very heartily thankful to you all, I am

enabled to place before you the following statistics, all of which relate either to our actual resources or to the work done by means of them.

Our population is probably now not much less than 570,000, with an average of about 22 males to 25 females, thus preparing us for some difference in our confirmation lists between the numbers of male and female candidates, but not by any means for the difference which does exist, and to which I shall advert afterwards.

Of this population, that of the rural portions is to speak generally, and on an estimate roughly taken for the whole Diocese, stationary if not diminishing,—an important fact in reference to grants from the Church Societies, many of which make increased accommodation one of their most stringent conditions. The condition, no doubt, generally considered, is wise and good, but this fact, which statistics put before us, may suggest the necessity of our acting with due discrimination in the administration of those funds and charities of which we may have a local or diocesan control. In the smaller country towns the population is in most cases decreasing; in the large towns, as is everywhere the case, continuously on the increase. For instance, in the ten-year period (from 1851 to 1861) between the census last taken and that which preceded it, while Tewkesbury has remained stationary, and Dursley and Campden lost 10 and 16 per cent. respectively, Gloucester has increased as much as 10 per cent., and Bristol and

Cheltenham nearly as much as 13 per cent. in their population.

Glebe § 5. To meet the spiritual needs of
houses and this population thus circumstanced and
residence. thus distributed, we have 451 benefices, 337 of which have available houses of residence; there being now 306 incumbents resident in their glebe houses, and 31 curates in the glebe houses of non-residents. Of these non-residents 24 have more than one benefice in the diocese; the rest have licenses for non-residence either on the ground of ill health or for some other reasonable and sufficient cause. We thus have as large a number as 114 benefices without glebe houses. In the case of these benefices several of the Incumbents reside strictly within their parishes, in other than glebe houses; several, as at Bristol, and in a few instances elsewhere, reside so contiguous to the parishes of which they are Incumbents as to be practically, though not technically, in residence. The whole of the above number, thus residing in or near their parishes, appear to be about 90; so that there must be, after making all reasonable deductions and allowances, not less than 20 of our benefices that are deprived of the blessing of a resident minister. The general result can, I fear, hardly be pronounced in all respects satisfactory. I may justly, then, express the earnest hope that, if I am permitted again to address you I may be enabled to report to you some improvement in this important particular.

§ 6. Our thoughts now naturally
Churches,
new and re- pass to the Churches in our diocese,
stored. and then to the ministerial work performed in them.

There is I rejoice to say, as everywhere in the country, so also among ourselves, a good and hearty spirit at work in reference to the erection of new Churches and chapels, and the restoration of old ones. In the eighteen months that have elapsed since my coming among you, I have consecrated¹ three new Churches, and re-consecrated three others which were so far enlarged and renewed as again to need the solemnity. Beside this, in the same period, at least three Churches have been restored, wholly or in great part, one or two have been enlarged, and, I am glad to add, several are now so far in progress that I expect, with God's blessing, to be present at two or three of the happy meetings that follow restoration, even before the close of the present year. On such occasions I shall always hope to be able to take part in the opening services, and humbly thus to express my sympathy and joyfulness. On two occasions I regret to remember that I was compulsorily absent; but now that I am becoming more inured to my responsible work, such absences will I trust, for the future, be very rare, if full notice is given me of the expected time of opening. Without this

¹ These six consecrations and re-consecrations were as follows :—in 1863, Huntley, June 24th; Nympsfield, July 23rd; Sevenhampton, Wilts, Sept. 23rd; Woodchester, Sept. 24th. In 1864, Little Compton, May 17th; Whelford, June 4th.

reasonable precaution I may, owing to the complication and length of engagements, sometimes be forced to forego the happiness, the real happiness to me, of being present at these cheering and edifying meetings.

While on this subject permit me to add two cautions.

A Faculty usually desirable. § 7. First, it has come to my knowledge that in one or two instances difficulties and unpleasantness have arisen from alterations and improvements having been made without the proper legal authority. Let me then advise you not to make any alterations without a Faculty. I am, believe me, most unwilling thus to seem to put a tax,—I rejoice to know that it is not a heavy one,—on efforts and undertakings for God's honour, but I am so completely convinced by observation and experience that heartburnings and complaints are very liable to follow even good works, when done without legal sanction, that for the sake of good order, and still more of charity and peace I give you this very necessary caution.

Gradual restoration often desirable. § 8. My second caution may seem chilling and over prudent, but here again experience has been my adviser. In the restoration of a church do not begin over hastily, or attempt too much at once. Let the plans be fully matured, and then fairly and wisely adjusted with reference to the funds that may be reasonably expected, first from the locality, and secondly from the Church societies or charities

which may be able to aid. Too often great inconvenience has arisen from a well-meant and disinterested, but unwise plunge into alterations or restorations quite beyond the powers of the parish, even when backed by diocesan or extra-diocesan grants. Nothing then remains but application for aid in every direction ; stayed works until more resources can be procured ; disappointments, anxieties, and a lingering debt.

Much of this is to be attributed to the prevailing desire to do everything at once, to have a complete restoration rather than one which will have to proceed by stages and be spread over a certain number of years. Yet our ancestors were well satisfied to adopt commonly the latter course, and I think experience will more and more teach us that they were wise and right. By a more gradual restoration a parish becomes interested, not merely for a certain number of anxious months, but perhaps for half a generation in the House of God where it worships. The work done, done well and truly up to a certain point and as far as first efforts could proceed, becomes a very eloquent though silent incentive to further effort. The restored southern aisle or transept soon makes the decay and neglect of the northern more plainly felt. In due time and with real heartiness and interest another effort is made,—for, believe me, this is a most certain truth, that giving is almost indefinitely improveable by practice,—and then at length all is done, bravely done, wisely done, patiently done, the

honour of God being even more advanced by the hopeful patience of His servants and worshippers than by the material result of their happy and transmitted labours.—I am not insensible to the arguments on the other side, especially those derived from a shrewd estimate of modern habits and feelings, but after some thought on the subject and some observation, I venture to remain convinced that my caution is not wholly unwise or unseasonable.

Let us now pass from the material edifice to the ministrations within it or in connexion with it.

Services § 9. From your recent returns and *on Sundays*. from other sources I learn that there are now in our Diocese, out of the 451 benefices, 31 Churches in which there are three full services each Sunday; the rest having two full services, with the exception of about 20 in which there is only one full service each Sunday.

Though this last number is not large, yet it is in some degree a reproach to us and is one of those numbers which I shall most sincerely rejoice to see decreasing. The excuse, for I cannot call it reason, usually alleged for the single service is the smallness of population or fewness of those who attend; but my brethren, the simplest considerations at once show us that such excuses are really invalid. If but few, in the foreordering of God, are committed to our charge, surely those few should rather have a greater than a less share of our spiritual care; if only from this common-place reason, that

the calls upon our time and duty are so few, that they may well be answered with faithfulness and readiness. Surely the answer at the last day will be exacted with greater strictness from those to whom but few have been committed, than from those who have had the graver solicitude and more varied anxieties of large populations to plead for their shortcomings.

The truth is, it is often more difficult to keep up to a good and high spiritual standard a small parish than a large one. In the latter case, method, necessary regularity, assistance from others, consciousness of sympathy, and the many other principles and influences that the charge of numbers brings with it make the path of duty more plain and defined. In the former case, what may be done any day is some times done no day; other pursuits or interests come in to fill up the weeks void; the little parish slowly recedes into the back ground; the cure of souls becomes not the primary but the secondary object; the call of duty is less consciously felt; the sermon becomes a greater test and trial; a conscious unreality mixes itself with words spoken and deeds done. The result often is that saddest of all things to contemplate, *spiritual apathy*,—apathy often good natured, and sometimes conscience smitten, but still in the sequel, pervasive, weakening all the springs of inner life, chilling sympathies, blunting sensibilities, making the love, the personal love, to Christ less and less realizable, clouding the present, and darkening the future. Bear

with me for these plain-spoken words, and permit them to renew the feeling of which many of us have perhaps been conscious,—that a small parish is a great responsibility, and to some a source of great spiritual trial.

Services § 10. Passing onward to services
on Festivals other than on Sundays I observe with
& weekdays. pleasure and thankfulness that there are 31 Churches in our Diocese in which there is daily service. In 88 there is service on all the Festivals and Holidays; in 176 on Christmas day, Ash Wednesday, Good Friday and Ascension day; in 56 on Christmas day, Ash Wednesday and Good Friday; in 56 on Christmas day, Good Friday and Ascension day, and in the remaining 104 only on Christmas day and Good Friday.

Such a result cannot be pronounced wholly satisfactory.

Daily Service. § 11. On daily service, while thus new in the Diocese, and as yet but imperfectly acquainted with the various circumstances of the various sections of which our congregations are composed, I will not say much. I know well that there are difficulties in small country parishes in getting together even two or three beside the family of the clergyman. I know too that it is often felt to be, especially where there is no curate, a burden (I speak in simple, homely language), a burden somewhat hard to sustain. I know this well, yet I must not hold back from saying,—

First, that if the congregation is composed of but

few, *very* few if you like, yet that those present very-few are in some sense representatives, and supplicants for the absent many.

Secondly, that to those who care closely to watch the motions of their hearts, and the librations of their inner life, public daily prayer will be found, in time, to exercise an influence on their heart, feelings, and character that could hardly have been imagined beforehand. What was first done as a duty becomes soon a consciously-felt privilege, and at last the comfort of a life.

Thirdly, I will add an observation from a happy personal experience of which, the remembrance has never left me. It once fell to me to take a six weeks of occasional duty at a small straggling agricultural parish of about 400 people. I found there daily service in the morning at half-past 8 o'clock. There was no curate; and so that there should be no snare or temptation ever to deem it a burden, it was understood to be a privilege, to be suspended in the case of any just and reasonable absence, but otherwise to be continuous. I judged that I should find it one of those many well-meant experiments ever on the very eve of breaking down; and I anticipated seeing plain marks of the difficulty of carrying out, with present habits, what I was, of course, ready to admit as, in the abstract, a rightful Christian practice. But the six weeks came and went, and the little congregation of 10 or 12, reinforced with a small group of school children (as it habitually was), never altered or failed. The labour-

worn faces met my eye, morning after morning, silently assuring me by the very regularity of appearance and obviousness of interest, that it was indeed felt to be, what I myself found it,—a privilege and a blessing; and I left that parish convinced that daily service, more especially early morning service, is by no means to be considered impracticable and unhopeful, in any well-regulated country parish, and that the introduction of it, even in small places, if tried in a proper spirit, and with all quietness and wisdom, will never be found to fail.

Celebration of the Holy Communion. § 12. My next remarks shall be on the answers given to enquiries relative to the Holy Communion.

From these it appears that there are, I much rejoice to say, 14 Churches in our Diocese in which there is an administration of the Holy Communion every Sunday, as well as on the great Festivals. In 23 Churches there is an administration every fortnight, and in 249 every month, 152 of that number including also a celebration on all the great Festivals. Passing down the list, I observe that there are 6 Churches in which the Lord's Supper is administered 10 times in the year; 17 in which it is administered 9 times; 43 in which it is administered 8 times; and that of the remaining number it is reported as administered only 6 times in 57 Churches; 4 times in 62 Churches, and alas! in 5 Churches no more than three times in the year.

Duty of § 13. I scarcely think, my dear
more fre- brethren, that we can be fully satisfied
quent Cele- with this result. I am ready to make
brations. all deductions for the discouraging languor in country congregations that is sometimes pleaded as countervailing efforts to introduce a more frequent celebration of the Lord's Supper. I am willing to own that, in some cases,—I hope such cases are few,—old customs are openly pleaded against what in blindness and ignorance are deemed if not demurred to, as innovations. I know, alas! that the neglect of a past generation may have sown the seeds of such doleful indifference, but I know also that our people, if addressed affectionately and earnestly, and with a heart that feels what the lips say, will soon be brought to welcome the blessed renewal of the memory of the Lord's precious death—"until He come," and will by numbers, slowly yet continuously, increasing, second our efforts to bring home to them the blessings of a more frequent partaking of the Bread of Life.

How often does a certain degree of coldness on our parts, an expression of a sense of duty rather than the glow of love, mingle sometimes even with the pulpit invitation or the private call, and serve, by those strange laws of the intercommunion of souls, of which we know so little, but which are, nevertheless, so operative and potent, keep up the very languor and indifference that our words are essaying to change. ^{to}

I will say then, nothing doubting, that not one of

us, who in true earnestness of soul and with a real love for the Lord Jesus, endeavours to introduce improvements in this vital matter, in his district or his parish, will fail to see, after a year has come and gone, an improvement in numbers, and perhaps even in the demeanour of his communicants that may be permitted to be to him one of the comforts of a death bed. Earnestness will never fail to meet with sympathy. Different standards will perhaps at first have to be aimed at, but in the sequel, I do not hesitate to say, no faithful man ought to rest satisfied with a lower standard than a celebration of the Lord's Supper once a month. In small country parishes it is probable that a higher standard cannot commonly be reached, but in large town parishes, and where outward circumstances may seem more favourable, we ought not, I feel Christianly confident, to rest contented with so measured an exhibition of our love for the Lord Jesus Christ, and of our desire to be one with Him and He with us.

I have spoken with studied calmness, and without any urgency of language on this momentous subject, but I do, with all warmth and heartiness, pray that the Holy and Eternal Spirit may vouchsafe to these words a persuasiveness that may bring them home to every heart. When every harbinger of the Lord's return seems year by year more clearly presenting itself, when the sea and waves of doubt and disbelief are sounding ever more bodingly in the watcher's anxious ear, when

men's hearts are failing them for inward disquietude, and when the gatherings together unto sundered companies that are themselves no less the precursors than the types of the last separations, are everywhere to be felt and recognised,—with such signs about us and around us, that He “that cometh will come and will not tarry,” God give us all grace with warmer and truer hearts, to invite, yea, to press our people to the heavenly feast, and ourselves, with a greater frequency and a deeper devotion, to celebrate with them the earthly antepast of the marriage-supper of our returning King.

Regular and periodical Communicants. § 14. Let me add only this last observation, that a greater frequency of administration of the Holy Communion is always found sensibly to increase the general number of regular participants. This number, the number of regular or, to speak more inclusively, of periodical participants, is I believe a very fair index of the spiritual state of any parish, and it is this number that we ought carefully to note, and for the gradual increase of which our best efforts and heartiest prayers ought to be more especially directed. I should be thankful, if we thus meet again hereafter, to be able to state to you the estimated aggregate of this important number in our diocese at large. At present I can only specify the average number of communicants generally, without reference to the regularity of individual attendance. This average number is,

by your returns, as much (I am glad to say, as 18,430,¹ and of these, perhaps, considerably the greater part are regular or periodical communicants. The number is such as generally to cheer and encourage ; but yet when we contrast it with the estimated number of those in average attendance at our Church Services, probably not less than 135,475, how the heart sinks, what irrepressibly sad thoughts does the contrast suggest, what melancholy estimates it forces upon us of the effect of the various influences and agencies in us and about us ; what seeming verifications it hints at of Scripture's gravest words ; how, with deductions for children, and every other reasonable deduction that gentle Christian wisdom might deem it fitting should be made, we yet must feel that the Christian work that has to be done among those entrusted to us is enough to tax the uttermost energies of the bravest and truest heart that ministers in this Diocese.

Adminis- § 15. A few words must now be said
tration of Ho- on the Sacrament of Baptism, in re-
ly Baptism. ference to the returns which you have made to the question I addressed to you. I regret that I neglected to make enquiry as to the time in Divine service at which it was administered. Pro-

¹ There has been some little difficulty in making a fair estimate from the returns ; as in those places, where there are more frequent Communion, the number at any given attendance is probably less than it would have been if the celebrations had been fewer, though the aggregate of regular attendants is of course greater. I have then regarded once a month as the lowest standard, and have adjusted the returns accordingly. To arrive at some notion of the amount of Church attendance, I have taken a mean between the numbers at each Service and added one fourth.

bably, however, I should have found there was considerable difference of practice among us on this point. In most of the well regulated rural parishes, where the rightful wishes of the clergyman are more easily acquiesced in than in the congregations of the larger and more composite character which we find in our towns, it would probably have appeared that administration after the Second Lesson, especially in the afternoon service, was more and more becoming the rule. In town congregations, owing to the length of the Morning Service and the prevalence of an Evening rather than of an Afternoon Service I do not doubt I should find the practice was different.

In reference to this subject, I do not wish to speak in terms that might be deemed unduly rigorous, or as enforcing observances that might seem in some cases difficult or impracticable. It is easy enough to reiterate rules when, as in the subject before us, those rules rest upon rightful authority, but it is not always easy so to reiterate them as to make them welcome and accepted. I may feel then that, to some extent, allowance may be made for peculiar or exceptional circumstances, and especially for a state of things which is confessedly only in the process of wise transition to what is orderly and legitimate ;—still having said this, I must add, *First*, my distinct opinion that the administration of Public Baptism at any other period than upon “Sundays and other Holy Days when the most number of people come together,” and at any

other time on such days than when the congregation might have the opportunity, if they would, of uniting in the service, ought clearly to be avoided, save in cases of very distinct necessity. *Secondly*, that the rule in the Rubric as to time of administration is so distinct in its provisions, and so clear in its design and intentions, that every effort should be made to revert to it, and loyally to carry it out. *Thirdly*, that in town congregations, where the greatest difficulties are experienced owing to the length of the Morning Services and the late hour of the Second Service, these difficulties might be to a great degree obviated by administration, at the proper place in the service, on Holy days, and when these might not be sufficient by Afternoon Services on stated Sundays and even (if need be) on other appointed days which might be thus specially set apart for this holy Sacrament, and on which after such Afternoon Services, there might very wisely be a short lecture, designed to explain and bring home to the hearts of those present the meaning, privileges, holiness, and unnumbered blessings of Christian Baptism.

Confirmation, times & places of. § 15. From your returns I learn that there have been 39,212 Baptisms in the last three years in this Diocese. This number I will consider with reference to the next subject which now naturally comes before us, our Confirmations.

In the latter half of the past year and the first half of the present I have held 53 Confirmations

in various portions of the Diocese, those of last year being principally in the Bristol portion, and of this year exclusively in the Gloucester portion. This division, which was suggested by my place of residence at the periods in which I was confirming, will now, for the convenience of us all, be adhered to for the future. I shall hope to confirm in the Northern portion of the united Dioceses during the period immediately preceding Easter, and in the Southern portion towards the close of autumn, when I shall hope to be in residence at Bristol. By this arrangement I shall endeavour to reduce our Confirmations to an orderly and regular system, and then, having done so, to multiply as far as I am able, and to change, as far as it can conveniently be done, the various centres.

I quite sympathize with those who feel that it is much to be desired that this Apostolic rite should be performed in as many Churches in our Diocese as can be chosen for the purpose. I feel it in the highest degree desirable that the Sponsors, Parents and friends of our children should be, as far as possible, the spectators of the formal renewal, on the part of those dear to them, of the solemn Baptismal vow. This I feel as warmly as any of you, and you may depend upon my bearing it well in mind and memory when I make my annual arrangements. Still I feel that there are some places which must always remain centres, and others, which owing to their difficulty of access or limited accommodation can hardly ever count on

being regularly adopted as places to be periodically visited. Places of this nature may sometimes have a Confirmation appointed on some Sunday, but on this point I will not at present make any definite promises, as in the seven Confirmations which I have held on Sundays I have observed several things which have led me to question whether confirmations on the Lord's day, in the presence of a general and often a very mixed congregation, always tend so much to edification as might have been at first supposed.

It is painful to recall the fact, but it is observedly true, that on Sundays, especially on Sunday afternoons, a large number often come to witness the solemn rites who show by their demeanour that it is rather curiosity than any higher feeling that has brought them together. Hence in towns Sunday-Confirmations cannot often be held with profit, and in the country,—though I admit that good order commonly prevails, and that sponsors and friends can more conveniently attend,—yet I do not know whether the week-day quietly and solemnly sundered from its work-day associations, the silent Church, the gentle seriousness spread over all things, the ordered walk, often of the shepherd with his sheep, to the place of meeting, the wise and tender counsels dropped on the homeward way, and, perhaps, the little happy re-union in the School-room or Rectory afterwards, do not all tend to make the country child regard Confirmation with deeper feelings, and to define it more in retrospect, when the holy rite

is administered under well-arranged circumstances, on a week-day.

Number of those Confirmed. § 16. During the time I have been with you, which, in reference to Confirmations, may be considered as rather more than a fully completed year, I have confirmed in all 6490 candidates, 4102 of these being females, and 2288 males. In this latter number I hope, as time goes on, we may observe an increase; nay, in reference to the general aggregate we may still hope for improvement; for though the whole number stands in a seemingly fair proportion to the number of Baptisms, when due consideration is taken of the increase of population in the interval between the time when those recently confirmed were baptised and the present time, yet, in reference to the number of our population between the ages of 15 and 18, the number of those confirmed in the course of the year is not much more than one tenth of the population between the limits above mentioned.

Behaviour of those confirmed. § 17. If, however, we are somewhat lacking in regard of numbers, I can say, with feelings of the deepest thankfulness, that the general behaviour and deportment of those confirmed has been uniformly good and edifying. Of the 53 places where I have confirmed, in one only have I observed behaviour which did not give me satisfaction, and there it will be different for the future,—while in many places I was cheered and comforted beyond words by the devoutness of

manner, and in some instances by the depth of feeling that was shown by those on whom I laid my hands. Practice makes it very easy to read countenances, and to form a general estimate of the state of preparation and of present inward feeling of those grouped round. I always look anxiously and closely, and it is thus with due consideration that I now bear my joyful testimony even to something more than a mere outward decorum in those that have been confirmed during the past year.

Number of those confirmed that have become Communicants § 18. And has this past judgment of the outward eye been subsequently confirmed and sustained by that one great evidence of the inworking grace of the Eternal Spirit—approach to the Lord's Table? Have the seven-fold gifts of the Holy Ghost, so solemnly prayed for in the Service of Confirmation, been vouchsafed in such blessed measures as to be recognised in the outward manifestation afforded by a humble desire to become one with Christ in His blessed and heavenly Feast? Has the decorous Catechumen become the regular Communicant? Anxiously, most anxiously, have I looked at that part of your returns in the case of all those parishes from which I have received candidates for Confirmation, and this is the result.

In 229 out of the 253 parishes from which I have received candidates for Confirmation I may mention that, on a general average, more than a fourth part of those confirmed have become Com-

municants, or rather, to speak more carefully, have attended the Holy Communion since they were confirmed. In the case of a few of the remaining number of parishes I am thankful to observe that hopes are expressed, but I regret to feel that our statistics leave us with this result, that in 24 parishes none of those confirmed by me are noticed as having already become Communicants.

Here, again, as ever, I am willing to make every reasonable deduction. I will suppose that in many cases candidates were received at as early an age as either my circular or exceptional recommendation allowed them to present themselves, and that being so young they have not, for the most part, been as yet judged sufficiently prepared for the Holy Communion. I will take into account the probable fact that many have gone into service and so have been lost sight of; I will not overlook the supposition that we may conscientiously rather differ, one from another, as to the age at which approach to the Lord's Table is deemed proper, advisable. I will make all these deductions and any others than a wise and sober observer might suggest, yet still with numbers before us, 6490 confirmed, and the remembrance that a certain proportion of these were of full age, and only 1942 of these reported as having received the Holy Communion since their confirmation, we cannot by any means feel that we ought to rest satisfied with such a result. Nay more, when we remember that the number I have mentioned is, for the

most part, very inclusive, and takes in all those who under the temporary glow of better feelings may have communicated once, and not afterwards, we may be inclined to enquire the reasons why the general proportion of those who have communicated to those who have been confirmed is no larger, and why, in the case of many, especially of the rural parishes, the returns are still much below what we might reasonably expect.

*Longer and
more syste-
matic prepa-
ration desi-
rable.*

§ 19. The reason, my dear brethren, I believe can easily be assigned, and so, with God's blessing, the remedy suggested. Confirmation is at present a rite too much isolated from the general

working of our pastoral system. In country places it comes once in three years. I have already, in several instances, offered it at the end of a shorter period, but it has been declined,—always kindly, and sometimes thankfully, yet declined. I readily defer to this judgment, because I feel it, in most cases, to be based on sound experience, and not to arise from any disinclination to enter upon additional work. A biennial course,—except in larger towns, where it seems always desirable,—might prove, in rural districts, more than could be conveniently kept up either by Bishop or Clergy.

Let our course then, except in towns, be triennial. But are we to remain passive all the interspace between successive Confirmations except just for the two or three months before the Bishop's circular? Would it not be possible to

have our young people so grouped that each year of the three should find us preparing for Confirmation. In our Sunday-schools there would be three little groups; the first, the most distant from the time of confirmation,—children of twelve and thirteen, to whom a few words might be said from time to time, not by way of preparation, but if I may so express myself, of premonition. They might be, in the first instance, invited to witness Confirmation, if held in their parish; they might be made familiar with it by mention and allusion in reference to themselves, and be taught to look for it as coming gradually nearer. The subject might, at any rate, be introduced into their thoughts and hold a place in the innocent forecastings of childhood.

The second group would be of those a year nearer confirmation. To them the subject might be spoken of a little more frequently, and gradually made the substratum of passing comment or illustration. When the third group, those about to be confirmed, were being formally instructed, the second group might be permitted to be present and to hear what would be expected of themselves a year later. Thus three groups of children might, almost without effort, be kept in gentle training for Confirmation. And this training might be looked for at set times and seasons.

As my Confirmations will, by the blessing of God, be in orderly cycles, spring and autumn, these preparations and, if I may coin a word,

ante-preparations might be carried on for a few weeks in spring or autumn as the case might be ; they would be looked forward to ; there would be no hurried gatherings up just when the year of pressure came round ; the greater part of those to be confirmed would be known and even registered, and when the time came all would be preparedness and tranquillity.

Occasional teaching af- § 20. But this, if carried out ever
ter Confir- so faithfully, would not alone be suffi-
mation. cient to convert more of our Catechu-
 mens into Communicants. It would have considerable effect, because Confirmation would have been brought more completely home to their hearts, and would have occupied their thoughts for a longer time ; still it would not be the remedy in its completeness. This I believe is, with the blessing of God, to be looked for in the endeavour to keep up, for a time at least, some connexion with those who have been recently confirmed. It is certain that many will drop away ; some will evade ; some will soon pass into service ; still there will be a remnant that might occasionally be gathered together, affectionately reminded of the past, and strengthened with spiritual counsel amid the thickening dangers and temptations of that eventful period in our spiritual life when youth is passing into manhood or womanhood, and when the bough is taking what may be its lasting bend and direction.

Could our young people be thus systematically

prepared for Confirmation, and thus, for a time at least, kept together afterwards, I verily believe the most happy and cheering results would follow. The scanty numbers now before us would speedily be doubled and trebled, and soon, sooner perhaps than we may imagine, in a very greatly altered proportion, would the Catechumen become the Communicant.

Plans to facilitate more frequent Confirmations.

§ 21. It was originally my intention to give what assistance I might be able to this endeavour to keep the subject of Confirmation annually before our young people, by confirming at two or more places in each Deanery every year; so that candidates in most of the parishes might have the opportunity of being presented, if it should be thought necessary or desirable for them, on one or other of the two years in which Confirmations were not held in or near to their own parishes. This plan however, owing to the difficulty of introducing modifications in an existing, and fairly orderly, system, and also, I may add, owing to the distance and difficulty of access of some portions of the Deaneries most remote from Gloucester or Bristol, I have not been able to arrange, as I first wished, for the whole Diocese. Still, to many country places, it will be found that opportunities will be afforded by existing arrangements for the presentation of candidates, if required, more than once in the three years. In the three large towns I shall always be ready to confirm, if requested in proper time, every

year, and I rejoice to be able to announce, in the case of Bristol, that by the kind offer of churches for this purpose made to me by some of the Incumbents, there will be Confirmations every year in that place,—general and more numerous every two years, but at two or more centres, annually.

Ordina- § 22. I will now pass to that in
tions, num- which we all must be deeply interested,
ber of, and though, by the nature of the case, few
nature of the only directly concerned,—our Ordina-
candidates.

tions. I have felt it good for us all that they should be held, not, as formerly, twice a year but four times, viz. at the four stated seasons. This I believe is found a general convenience to Incumbents, as diminishing the chance of their being left for any length of time without a curate, while to the candidates themselves and I am sure I may add, in my own case, to the Bishop, the advantage can scarcely be overestimated. The candidates being proportionately fewer in number at each of the four Ordinations can now be dealt with so much more individually. I have the happiness of feeling that I know my candidates thoroughly and personally. I have frequent opportunities of talking with each one, and, with God's assistance, of giving such advice as each one may seem more particularly to need. It is a happy time while we are together, and when the Monday morning comes and we part, it has been on my part always with the feeling of regret that the happy tranquil time of real and deep sympa-

thies of quiet counsels, and of united prayers, has come to its close.

During the time that I have been with you I have held six Ordinations, and have admitted 28 to the office of Deacon and 26 to the Priesthood. Of these 54 I am most thankful to say nearly all have had the great, the very great advantage of an University education, the exact distribution of the different candidates being as follows,—22 from Cambridge, 15 from Oxford, 3 from Dublin, 1 from Durham, and 2 only, from Theological Colleges, not having previously been at the University. Being more and more convinced of the value of an University education for those who are hereafter to be engaged in pastoral work, and constantly observing, as I do, that such an education gives aptitudes in the minister's daily relations to his people which no other system seems equally, or even nearly equally, to supply, I may thus far congratulate our Diocese on still drawing her pastoral supplies from the ancient sources, and I may take the opportunity of expressing my sincere hope that, for the future, we may be equally fortunate.

As much anxiety has been everywhere felt and expressed on the supposed diminution in the numbers of our candidates, and also, in many quarters, on their supposed lower standard in reference to theological knowledge, I will briefly mention what inferences I have been able to draw from my own limited observations and experience.

Decreasing number of applicants for Holy Orders. § 23. In regard of numbers, I think it will be found that there certainly *is* a falling off,¹—but not perhaps by any means to the extent that has been supposed, nor without our being able very satisfactorily to account for it. Let us first remember and thankfully remember that the gradual decrease in the number of non-resident Incumbents has had to some extent the tendency to diminish the number of Curates actually required in rural districts, and also has tended to withdraw what is often deemed the most eligible form of curacy,—sole charges. Contemporaneous with this diminution in the number of places requiring a Curate, there have been, as we know, numerous openings for young men of a very attractive kind in the Civil Service in India, and elsewhere. It has been said, very freely, that religious scruples have also tended to thin our numbers and that the growing scepticism of the times is keeping back from Holy Orders several of our promising students. These last causes have I believe been much exaggerated, partly from innocent but undue apprehensions, partly, I fear, from a readiness to believe that it

¹ From a carefully drawn up paper supplied to me by my friend and secretary Mr. Holt, I find that from 1834 to 1843 inclusive, the numbers of those ordained Deacons *and* Priests were,—from Oxford, 203; from Cambridge, 164; from Dublin, 4; from Durham, 2; from other places, 7; Literates, 5: total, 385. From 1844 to 1853, the numbers were,—from Oxford, 219; from Cambridge, 152; from Dublin, 26; from Durham, 2; from other places, 9; Literates, 8: total, 416. During the last ten years; viz., from 1854 to 1863 inclusive, the numbers stand,—from Oxford, 160; from Cambridge, 98; from Dublin, 29; from Durham, 5; from other places, 19; Literates, 13: total, 324.

is so, and from a desire to use this as an argument for relaxations in those doctrinal tests which our Church most rightly imposes on all who minister at her altars.

That there is some falling off in numbers is, I believe, certainly to be admitted. That we are beginning to feel it in our own Diocese, in the case of less promising curacies is, I believe, also to be admitted. I certainly observe an increasing tendency in young men to pick and choose their curacy, and I fear I also see an avoidance of town charges where the work is of a laborious or semi-missionary nature. I admit this, for experience has forced it on my notice ; I admit it and I regret it, still the tide is now apparently beginning to turn, and the time of lowest ebb, as regards candidates for Holy Orders, almost over. It will at any rate be our wisdom to wait patiently, and not hastily to recruit our ranks with the crowd of applicants (I speak deliberately, for the number of such applications I receive is very great) of a lower stamp, educational and social, than we have hitherto accepted, who are now offering themselves for ordination in our Mother Church.

It is invidious, most invidious, to make allusions to inconveniences arising from a lowered social status, and I will make none, though I know that they are felt by us all. I dare confidently say there are many here present, wise, kindly, Christian men of the world, who know, as well as I do, how observant our country people are of the

general bearing of their minister, and how an instinctive respect is shown and a consequent influence and authority conceded in one case, which is vainly to be looked for in another. Let this pass, however, but at any rate let no alteration in our educational standard be tolerated even in thought. At a time like the present, a time of great hope yet of deep anxiety, at a time like the present, when meek and persuasive learning is more urgently needed than it has been since the Reformation, at such a time and at such a crisis to admit into our Priesthood men of inferior education and lower intellectual qualifications is to endanger the very foundations of our Church, and ourselves, unconsciously yet no less surely, to aid the assailants of our common Faith.

Standard of attainments not lowered. § 24. At present, as far as my own experience goes, I have observed no falling off in knowledge theological or general. I always conduct some part of the examination for Holy Orders myself, and as I have had a long experience in examining, the results arrived are perhaps generally not untrustworthy. Thank God, they have hitherto been such as to encourage and to comfort: none have been rejected; none I believe caused us any anxiety, while many showed a sound and hearty knowledge of God's word,—a knowledge of heart and head combined that justly made us hopeful as to their future success in teaching, guiding, and forewarning those who might be committed to their pastoral charge.

Thus, my dear brethren, as far as our own Diocese is concerned, we may, at present, with God's blessing, be of good cheer; at any rate, as regards the attainments of those who come among us; and we may also hope that the falling off in numbers will be stayed. Let me only add this further remark, that I will gladly do all that may lie in my power to provide Curates for any who may apply to me. I encourage all, who may have it in their power, to mention to me the names of deserving young men who may be desirous to take orders in our Diocese; and I also readily receive the names of Curates who are in search of a sphere of labour among us. By this means I have sometimes been, and I shall gladly continue to be, a mode of communication between Incumbents and Curates. To myself the trouble of keeping lists of applicants is not great, and the advantage to the Diocese at large is perhaps of some amount, as helping to diminish the difficulties that are sometimes felt by Incumbents seeking temporary or permanent help.

I have now I think touched upon most of the subjects that relate more particularly to Pastoral Work, to what we are doing and what we have done, and it remains only for me to pass onward to a consideration of what more may be done, what irregularities may be removed, what improvements may be suggested either in matters of detail or in the general working of the Diocese as a whole.

*Irregulari-
ties.
Unlicensed
assistants.*

§ 25. First, permit me to speak of some prevailing irregularities, which I trust may gradually disappear from among us. First, let me specify—

The employment of unlicensed or un-approved assistants. During the short time I have been with you, I regret to say that several cases have come to my knowledge in which clergymen have been performing duty in this Diocese, for three, six, and in one case even eighteen months without my being made aware of the fact. This, I fear, I must characterize as a grave irregularity, and as fraught with inconveniences, if not even with positive danger. It might easily happen,—shall I say, it has happened,—that a stranger might come among us, whose antecedents would not bear the investigation to which they would certainly be subjected if his name were brought before the Bishop. I have real and serious reason for speaking on this point, and I shall ask you, somewhat pressingly, not to avail yourselves of the services of any stranger, or indeed of any one, for any length of time, without notice, or some form of reference to myself. I do not wish to hamper you with restrictions that you might feel to be either vexatious or unnecessary, so I will give you as wide a margin as will cover the average period of absence, and will say that if any of you should contemplate availing yourselves of alien assistance for a period exceeding six weeks, or at most, two months, the name of the clergyman whose assistance is pro-

posed to be made use of should be notified to the Bishop. Letters of Orders will then be officially inspected, and (if the proposed assistant be a stranger) such testimonials required as even my limited experience has shown to me to be,—I deliberately say so,—in the highest degree necessary.

Resignation of Curacies without notice. § 26. A second irregularity, somewhat allied to this, though of a converse nature, is the resignation of cures on the part of Curates without *the proper three months' notice* being given to the Bishop. This, I regret to say, has happened rather frequently; and in some cases has been productive of grave inconvenience. I trust that this public mention of the fact will be sufficient to check a habit which is a little on the increase, and is plainly undesirable, and out of due order.

Marriage of Persons not residing in the Parish § 27. A third irregularity, which has already caused me much anxiety, is the want of due caution that is sometimes shown in marrying persons *who are not regular residents in the parish*. In several cases very grave complaints have been preferred, and, as investigation showed, in some of them with justice. Not to mention the grave penalties that attach themselves to the responsible act of marrying persons about whom due enquiry has not been made, let me only call attention to the grievous nature of the act; how cases might receive the outward blessing of the Church that were disgraceful and criminous, how

a brother-clergyman's watchfulness and pastoral care might be frustrated, and how distress and misery might be brought home to innocent and unconscious households. Too often the enquiry as to residence is left to the clerk; and on the ground of his bare report, insecure as that obviously may be, the marriage is performed, and misery, perhaps, inflicted on many for the whole term of their lives.

The Act of Parliament¹ is I believe, silent as to the nature of the residence, during the 15 days over which the publication of Banns must necessarily extend; this, however, is certain, that no clergyman is obliged, and I may add, *ought*, to publish Banns unless the persons to be married shall, seven days at the least before the first publication of the Banns, *respectively* deliver, or cause to be delivered to the clergyman a notice of their names and of the house or houses of their respective abodes and of the time during which they have dwelt in them. Full provision is thus made by the Act for the proper and necessary enquiries, and I do most sincerely hope and request that such enquiries be made with the utmost care, and under the fullest sense of grave responsibility. I am using, on the present occasion, no stronger language than has been used by one of our most eminent Judges. An authority no less than Lord Eldon², when deciding in a case

¹ 4 G. iv., c. 76, § 7.

² See note A.

of this nature, most distinctly pointed out the serious duty of careful enquiry that the law of the land imposes on the minister applied to, and the grave censure he deserves if he fails to make proper investigation. It is only right that I should add that in two cases complained of I had the great pleasure of finding that the clergyman of the parish had in each case himself personally enquired, called at the places of abode, and had taken such precautions, that the complaint assumed the form, not of want of caution in the clergyman, but of shameless falsehood in the case of the unhappy persons who had applied to him.

I am told, my Reverend Brethren, that in some of the parishes that lie round our great towns this habit of being married away from the usual places of abode is clearly increasing. It is attributed, in many cases, to a discreditable desire to avoid the proper publicity that should attach itself to so responsible an act, and, for every reason, ought to be most carefully watched, and, where possible, argued with and repressed.

§ 28. I now pass to what is more agreeable,—a short notice of those improvements which may be beneficially introduced in the general working of our whole united Diocese.

This, in fact, constitutes the *second* division of this portion of my charge. We have considered, somewhat at length, present workings; let us now consider how these workings may be extended and improved.

There are at least three subjects which appear to require our attention, on two of which, I am happy to say, I have had the great advantage of the counsel and advice of the Rural Deans, at our meeting last August. On the third subject I have also received many valuable suggestions, which I shall incorporate in my present comments.

Diocesan School Inspection. § 29. The first subject is one of very great importance, Diocesan School Inspection. At present we have but little general knowledge of the state of Church-schools, Sunday or National, in our Diocese. At first I contemplated sending round some questions that it might be desirable should be answered, and, perhaps, alluded to in the present Charge; but, on consideration, it seemed desirable that this should be suspended till we can ascertain whether we may not, nay, I will be bold to say, whether we ought not at once to set on foot some plan of regular Diocesan inspection, and so prepare the way for what we clearly need, and what the experience of neighbouring Dioceses shows to be of the utmost importance,—a Diocesan Board of Education.

It is thought by some for whose opinions and experience I have a great respect, that we are not yet ripe for the establishment of a Diocesan Board, but that we may very beneficially and very hopefully prepare the way by some plan of Diocesan inspection to be carried out in the different Deaneries. I confess that I myself *rather* lean to this opinion, but I should be thankful, and so I know would my

advisers be, if the interest in the subject that these comments may awaken were at once to raise up for us a Diocesan Board, and to supersede the more preparatory and tentative measures to which I may at present incline.

These measures, it is thought might be as follow,—it being clearly and distinctly understood, from the very first, that inspection will only take place where it is wished for and requested.

The Rural Dean, in each Deanery, might secure the assistance of two or three clergymen within its limits, who might be both able and willing to undertake the responsible duty of inspecting such schools in the Deanery as might wish to receive them. The appointment would naturally receive the formal sanction of the Bishop, and to him, until a Diocesan Board came into existence, the annual reports would also naturally be made. At the annual meeting of Rural Deans (which I trust will be one of the fixed arrangements of our Diocese) the reports could receive further general consideration, and such new steps taken forward as the experience already acquired might seem to suggest.

One of the first of these steps would be, I do not doubt, the establishment of a fund for Prizes ;¹ inspection without some system of rewards being not very likely to become popular or permanent. The publication of these awarded prizes would at once follow, and each Deanery would become inte-

¹ Such an arrangement has been for some time adopted, with increasing success, in my native County of Rutland.

rested in the results. When interest became thus generally awakened in the Deaneries separately, amalgamation would naturally follow, and what we seem so much to need, a general Diocesan Board, would come almost spontaneously into existence.

I should, as I have already said, heartily rejoice if we could arrive at this result more compendiously, and I will give my best aid to the attempt at once to raise such a Board,—but meanwhile I will, at any rate, commend to your serious consideration the preliminary measures which I have sketched out, and express the hope that our church-schools may receive an improved and extended organization, and that sound and scriptural education may be, still more generally, diffused and promoted throughout our Diocese.

Furtherance of Ruri-decanal action. § 30. The second subject is of a somewhat different nature, yet certainly not of less importance, as it relates to the improvement of Church organization and to the promotion of intercommunion among us all. It may be summed up in the general definition and under the general head of,—furtherance of ruri-decanal action.

(a) The first and most simple way of improving existing arrangements is the reduction in size of some of the Deaneries, especially in the case of those that from geographical considerations alone must be pronounced as almost obviously unmanageable. I am glad to be able to state that the arrangements for a division of the Deanery of

Stonehouse into two portions, a northern and southern, are now fully completed; and that those for a division of the Deanery of Winchcomb will soon also be concluded. The Deanery of Hawkesbury seems also to require a similar division, and the neighbouring Deanery of Bristol, even still more urgently, a division, though of different nature. In this last case it will probably be found desirable to assign the city of Bristol and the parishes immediately connected with it to one Rural Dean, and the northern, and indeed all the strictly rural portions to another. In the changes, however, that may be made in these cases it is my desire to leave the Deanery, though so divided, as still, territorially considered, a whole; so that whenever collective meetings might be thought desirable the old unity might be readily reassumed under the presidency of the two Rural Deans, who would naturally rank according to seniority of appointment.

(*b*) With this design, however, for making our Ruri-decanal action still more hearty and available, I have ventured to associate another plan with which I myself am to a great degree concerned. I hope, in the two years that intervene between Visitations, that I may have the advantage of presiding myself at Ruri-decanal meetings in each one of the thirteen or fourteen Deaneries into which the Diocese is divided, and of formally conferring with you, in your different districts, on subjects both of general and local

interest. I hope thus that the common and perhaps just complaint, that a Bishop is not seen enough in the more remote portions of his Diocese, may be, to some extent, modified ; and further that we may thus gradually feel our way towards the more general union of the Diocesan Synod. At present I feel unable to express a definite opinion on the desirableness of the more general measure, save that I think we, in this Diocese, are not yet ripe for it ; but, at any rate, I may say with some confidence that tentative measures for more frequent and hearty unions cannot be otherwise than productive of good, and cannot fail to strengthen our fraternal bonds, to quicken and enlarge our sympathies, and to give a fresh life to Church work and Church organizations in every district.

I entertain the hope that I may be able to time these visits to the different Deaneries so as to coincide with the different Committee meetings of the Diocesan Association. I shall thus have the benefit of the presence of some of our leading laity, and also be able to observe personally, in each Deanery, the working of a Society in which I am most deeply interested, and which, by God's blessing, has helped much to bind us all into the happy and brotherly unity that I thankfully observe existing throughout all portions of the Diocese.

Collections, § 31. The third subject which I shall
general and now specify as requiring some considera-
Diocesan. tion, with a view to improvements and

expansion, is that of our contributions and collections for general or Diocesan purposes.

I will first speak of our efforts in aid of the leading religious Societies, and then of what we are doing for our two home Societies,—the Diocesan Clergy Charity and the Diocesan Association.

Collections for Foreign Missions. § 32. With regard to what we contribute to the leading religious societies, I do not think we fall below the general average. It is not easy to specify very methodically, in every case, the separate sources, whether from collections, associations, or lists of private subscriptions, from which our contributions respectively come, owing to the different manner in which the accounts of the different societies are kept,—so I will content myself with the following general statements, which I have collected from the various annual reports.

I am glad to observe that the remittances for last year to the Society of the Propagation of the Gospel amounted to £2076, the largest collections coming from the Deaneries of Bristol and Winchcomb, viz. £450 and £323 respectively, and the least from the Deaneries of Stowe and Cricklade; from each of which the collection was no more than £52. I am glad also to state that the remittances from the Diocese to the Church Missionary Society reach the large sum of £2935, of which £2689 comes from Gloucestershire, £246 from the parishes in North Wiltshire. Thus above £5000 a year is contributed by the Diocese for Missionary purposes.

Large, however, as this is, I hope it will greatly increase. Our colonial Empire is now urgently calling to us for aid from every quarter,—so urgently, that, as you are probably all aware, a most pressing appeal has been issued by our four Archbishops with some specifications of the nature and amount of the claims of our own dependencies. And beyond these and in addition to these lie the wide realms of heathenism, crying to us out of the depth of pagan darkness to deliver the Lord's testimony among them and to hasten His coming.

Collections for Home Purposes. § 33. In home missionary work we are, I fear I must say, *below* the proper standard, especially in respect of one of the two great Societies, the Additional Curates Society. The collections in behalf of this Society last year, including two or three large donations, only amounted to £575, while the grants made by it were £455. From two of our Deaneries nothing has been collected, from another only £1. 7s. 6d., from two others a sum, in each case, under £2. 10s., and from two others sums under £5. In fact from seven Deaneries comprising nearly 200 parishes this Society would appear to have collected something under £9. I do trust another year that the result will be widely different. The account of the efforts made in behalf of the other great Society are much more cheering, the receipts of the Pastoral Aid Society from our Diocese amounting to as large a sum as £1,944.

Of the remaining Societies I may mention that

the National Society has received from us £233, and has expended in our Diocese £173,—a sum which I do sincerely trust will call forth larger subscriptions for the future. The Church Building Society, a Society now standing greatly in need of assistance, has expended £495, and only received in return £87, the smallness of this sum being perhaps in some degree owing to the competing claims of our own Diocesan Society. The list shall close with the notice that the remittances to the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge from the District Committees appear to amount in all, donations and subscriptions, to about £500; and that those to the Bible Society reach to upwards of the large sum of £1700¹, the subscriptions from Bristol and its neighbourhood alone amounting to nearly one third of the whole.

Diocesan Societies. § 34. Our Diocesan Societies must not be forgotten in this enumeration. Of these I will mention more particularly the long-established Clergy Charity, and the recently formed Diocesan Association.

Clergy Charities. § 35. The first-mentioned of these the Clergy Charity would appear to be in a generally satisfactory condition. The subscriptions of last year amounted to £333, and are expected to be about the same this year; the sub-

¹ In the case of this Society some little difficulty has been found in estimating the exact contributions of the Diocese, as the remittances are specified in the Report according to Counties. A similar difficulty was found in the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge when local remittances are returned according to districts.

scriptions from the Deaneries of Gloucester and Hawkesbury being considerably the largest, and that from Bristol the least. We must remember we have a clergy charity at Bristol of ancient date and of which, however, great importance the operation, are not necessarily confined to the Diocese. This extra-diocesan liberality is almost the natural consequence of the geographical position of Bristol, and is justly to be approved of and commended; still it may deserve serious consideration whether this influential charity might not beneficially act towards the Bristol portion of the Diocese in a sort of parallelism with the munificent Warneford charities, the operations of which do not, as we know, extend to the Bristol portion of the Diocese, but to the ancient Diocese of Gloucester.

I am speaking, I am well aware, on a subject in which there has been considerable difference of opinion, and I am desirous of expressing myself with all proper caution, still I cannot but think the hint I have ventured to throw out is worthy of some consideration. With the Clergy charity extending over the whole Diocese, and the Warneford and Bristol charities giving aid separately to the two component parts, we should have a provision within our own boundaries, for the assistance of our Clergy and their families, considerably greater than is to be found in any other diocese in the kingdom.

The sums granted this year by the Diocesan Clergy charity and the Warneford Trust together

amount to not much short of £1900; the grants of the former being £830, and of the latter about £1060. For the existence of such noble funds in our Diocese we have indeed deep cause for thankfulness and rejoicing.

Diocesan Association. § 36. I wish I could speak as cheerfully on the subject of our Diocesan Association. We are, I deeply regret to say, sadly falling both in subscriptions and church collections. Our gross income last year was only £1348, while but three years ago it was £1803, and two years before that (the first year of the institution) as much as £2857. The most saddening part of our accounts is that which records the falling off in parochial collections. In 1860 they were 345,—only 11 less than in the first year of the Association, now I regret to tell you they have fallen to 221. This sudden fall in three years is so serious that I must specify by Deaneries. In the Deanery of Gloucester there were, I rejoice to say, no less than 38 collections, three parishes only in the Deanery being absent from the list. In the smaller Deaneries of Dursley and Fairford I also rejoice to observe that there were, in the former case only 4, and in the latter only 5 non-contributing parishes or districts. The number, however, rapidly rises. In Campden it reaches to 10 or 11. In South Malmesbury the number is 12; in Cricklade, 13; in Cirencester, 16; in North Malmesbury, 18; in Stonehouse, 24; in Stow, 25 (only seven parishes having sent in collections); in Winchcomb, 26; in

the Forest, 29 ; in Hawkesbury, 31 (only 8 places having contributed) ; and in Bristol, I regret to say, as much as 45 ;—it is just, however, to add that the subscriptions from this Deanery amount to £98. This list, which I have myself made with much care, will I trust speak for itself. I am willing to make every allowance that can fairly be made. I observe that the change took place contemporaneously with the recent changes in the presidency, the president, as we know, being the Bishop of the Diocese. I observe this, and I at once take heart, because I feel that it will only need a few words like the present to bring back the Institution to its former prosperity. Most earnestly then, do I ask you, my Reverend Brethren, to co-operate with me in supporting this Association. It now needs it more than ever ; for in consequence of the hearty feeling that pervaded the Diocese in reference to the objects of the Association three or four years only ago, projects were formed, and even works commenced which have received most inadequate support. With an income of a clear £2500 a year we might just, and only just meet the claims, but with anything short of this our position will be one which this wealthy County ought not to allow us to hold. Our subscription list certainly ought to be larger, both in the number of names and in the sums subscribed, and I hope our many wealthy laymen will bear with me when I ask for their help in far greater measures than it has yet been given.

It is, however, to the subject of our parish collections for the Association that I now particularly address myself. In one large Deanery we observe that they have not fallen off, and from that Deanery we may perhaps take a useful hint. The hint is,—to have the collections as nearly as possible simultaneously. Each Deanery can select the time that it deems most convenient; but I certainly venture to think that the time should be fixed and agreed on by all. It has been suggested to me that I should name a time for the whole Diocese, and the time specified has been from Septuagesima Sunday to the beginning of Lent. I do not like to *press* this, feeling that there may be in some cases local reasons against the time of just weight: still, I will not hesitate to state my opinion and belief, that in general practice, the time named would be found very far from inconvenient, and the advantage to the society resulting from united action at the same time extremely great. What I do urge however, is the necessity of a return to a better state of things in regard to this important Society; and the wish that I express is that there should be collections in every parish in the Diocese every year.

*Extra-dio-
cesan Socie-
ties.*

§ 37. But we must not think alone of ourselves. Desirous as I am that our own Diocesan Association should stand first in order, and first receive our help, I now delay not to add my earnest hope and desire that there should be in every Church *at least* one other Col-

lection for one of the great religious Societies which have been lately mentioned. If our Diocesan Society claims our help and sympathy in the Spring, let Autumn, after God has blessed with His increase, Autumn, time of thankful hearts and ending cares, be the fitting time for extending our bounty and free-will offerings to the great causes which are advocated by the different Church Societies around us. All their aims and efforts are directed to one or other of three great objects,—Foreign Missions, Home Missions, and Home work. Let then one at least of these objects, each year, form a part of Autumn's thoughts, and be sustained by Autumn's offerings; drooping flowers and falling leaves all acting to us as Nature's and the God of Nature's monitors, to slack not our hands, but to do His work, to hasten His kingdom, to spread His knowledge, ere the night come and the hours of Christian effort be numbered and ended.

Number and times of Collections. § 38. Let these vernal and autumnal offerings, however, be considered the very least that each parish should make.

I have prescribed a low standard because I wish it to be extended to all; but we may feel hopeful and confident that in numbers, even of our country-parishes (where these collections are less easily made), there will be four collections in the year,—one each quarter. If so, perhaps, no better cycle could be adopted than that already specified, our Diocesan Society; Foreign Missions as furthered,

more especially, by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel and the Church Missionary Society; Home Missions, as represented by the Additional Curates' and Pastoral Aid Societies; and Home Work,—the last mentioned including such Societies as the National Society, the Christian Knowledge Society, the Bible Society, and the Church Building Society. And between the claims of these Societies, all righteously competing for righteous objects, there need be no local rivalries or difficulties arising from conscientious personal predilections. It would be easy enough, in the case of each of the three great objects, for each parish to select that Society in which its sympathies were more particularly enlisted. Our dear Lord's Gospel would thus be diffused, and His kingdom hastened, in blessed harmony and union,—the human agencies being different, but the end and object the same.

Best mode of making Collections. § 39. *How* these collections may best be made, I will not venture to prescribe. I know well the difficulty that is still so commonly felt in small country parishes in reference to Church collections. The imperfectly appreciated subject, the unstirred sympathies, the scarcely concealed apathy, the minimized gift from the reluctant, because unpractised, hand,—all these things are often alluded to as making it almost hopeless for us to carry out in small and remote rural parishes a regular system of periodical Church collections. I have well considered these things, and, what is better, I have had sufficient experience in them to

prevent me recommending any course that is completely hopeless or impracticable.

True ob- § 40. My fixed feeling is that our
ject of such rural poor have only to be interested in
Collection. the great objects of which we have been speaking, and that then their simple bounty will be given with all the readiness of her who gave her all, and with all the attendant blessings that such acts of faith and piety are permitted to bring. It must never be forgotten that the main object in view is not the gathering in of contributions, but the connexion of the parish with some one or other of the great causes of Christendom. The collected bounty is the link; that bounty is ordered and permitted by God to be one of the subsidiary agents in hastening His kingdom, and in this aspect it is to be asked for and received.

But it is not the amount; it is the fact that the contribution has been made, on which all that tends to bless or to edify really depends. Then the little Christian community in the wooded hollow or the wind-swept wold has its definite part and portion in the mighty spiritual struggles that are going on everywhere around us; it becomes bound by the sacred ties of common effort and common hope with the whole militant Church of Christ. The grey tower yonder among the trees is veritably one of the Lord's fortresses; that new-built schoolroom displays in the missionary map on its walls the battle grounds of the present and the future; yon knot of simple people are

even now warming each other's hearts with recollections of last night's lecture on the progress of their Master's kingdom; all have their interests and their share in the Lord's controversy What a difference, what a real startling difference, —a difference in the eyes, not so much of men as of ministering Spirits, is there between a parish such as I have alluded to, united by ties of sympathy with the best and holiest causes, and a parish in which there is no such bond, or no desire for such a bond. Here, a permitted union in interests and workings (Scripture encourages us so to speak) with the Coming One and His saints, consciously felt and openly shown; there, dull life, uncheered toil, and all the lowering influences and downward-dragging cares of the struggle for the things that perish.

The Offer- § 41. In the furtherance of these
tory and the holy objects I believe it will ultimately
Parish Asso- be found that the two things on which
ciation. we have to rely are the Offertory and the parish Association; the former as the proper and appointed mode of making the offering, the latter as the simple and natural agency by which the minister quickens the sympathies of those around him in the great causes for which the offerings are made.

I will not venture to give rules, but will only now say that experience shows that a parochial Association for Church purposes ever tends to exercise the most beneficial effect on the

parish as a whole,—and that the Offertory, if gathered from the whole congregation each time the Holy Communion is administered, will be found to yield results that beforehand could never have been anticipated. It is desirable that the object for which the offertory is to be made should be stated beforehand; and experience seems also to show that a public notice, placed within the Church, of the sum collected on the preceding occasion gives additional interest.

I rejoice to say that now, in several Churches within the Diocese, the Offertory is regularly established, and that the reports made to me, in one or two instances, of the sums collected for different Church purposes have been such as to have made me feel much thankful and hopeful surprise. I may also mention that in one of the largest parishes, territorially considered, within the Diocese, a parochial Committee or Association has been working under the Vicar for more than four years, and that the results have been of the most encouraging nature. The Church has been restored, a parochial library established; schools enlarged, and the whole parish united in Church interests and Church work to an extent that could hardly have been expected or hoped for.

PART II.

PRESENT CHURCH ASPECTS.

We have now reached that point in which the first part of this Charge naturally passes into the second, and in which reflections on the state of the Church in a single locality extend themselves into some consideration of the present aspects and characteristics of the whole Church of Christ in this country,—our passing trials, our brightening hopes, our gathering dangers.

General aspects cheering. § 42. To speak, in the first place, broadly and generally, there is *much* cause for hope and for thankfulness. Every where throughout the land there seems an increasing and increased desire to promote the honour of God and to bring the message of salvation, whether at home or abroad, to the ears and hearts of those who have not yet heard it. The restoration of Churches in every portion of the kingdom, the erection of Church schools, the warmer tone of the services in our town Churches, the gradual formation of village choirs, the evident tendencies towards wholesome Christian organization, Church congresses, approaching Synods, heartier working amidst our vast masses of town

populations, practical efforts on a very large scale to diminish the frightful amount of spiritual destitution that exists in crowded cities,—and last of all, and chief of all, the yearly-increasing colonial episcopate, and the glow of missionary labour that may now be felt in almost every portion of the habitable world.

Verily my dear brethren good influences are within us and about us on every side. Our dear Lord's promise that He would be with us till the end of the world, may now (praise be to His name) be more and more truly realized in all parts of this favoured land. There are happy signs,—I speak from some observation and experience,—of returning love and duty to the Church our Mother among some of those who separated from us in days less happy than the present. There are deepened sympathies among good men of widely different opinions; there are now gatherings together,—it may be from a common sense of common danger,—but gatherings together there are of faithful Christian men, for mutual support and even for co-operation, which a few years ago it would have been beyond hope to look for. All such-like good influences are now beyond all doubt working among us; Maran Atha is becoming more the Christian watch-word; 'the Lord cometh' is a truth now becoming more deeply felt through all the realms of Christendom.

Gathering dangers. § 43. But if there thus be light, blessed, cheering light there is, perhaps

as inseparably from it as in the natural world, dark and disquieting shadow. If there be some signs that the Lord's second advent is becoming more and more brought home to faithful hearts, more and more longed for, more and more prayed for, yet it cannot be denied that the influences of the dread harbinger, the Lawless One, are also becoming more sensibly felt throughout the length and breadth of the Christian world. Under one aspect we may say it must needs be so; and even while we recognise the almost self-evident revelations of the spirit of Antichrist, we may yet lift our heads and rejoice, knowing "that our redemption draweth nigh," and that He that cometh will come and will not tarry. Yet, under another aspect, we cannot but speak of the things around us in tones of increasing anxiety.

Scepticism is now plainly on the increase. We see it in those around us, we mark it in those of high intellectual gifts, we find it as we should have expected to find it among the worldly, we feel its presence in the current literature of the day; nay more, we begin to perceive some melancholy signs of its creeping in among ourselves,—signs strange and ominous indeed,—signs typical and precursory of that session of Antichrist in the temple of God,¹ which must be ere the end come. At present scepticism is displaying itself in four forms, and as each one of these is plainly different in its origin and characteristics from the others,

¹ 2 Thess. ii. 4.

and will require to be dealt with in a different way, I will pause briefly to specify them.

Scepticism of honest doubt. § 44. In the first place there is the scepticism of honest doubt,—the anxious enquiry of the perplexed but truthful and ingenuous spirit,—“how *can* these things be”? How *can* the records that once I trusted and which still I love, be reconciled with the results of modern criticism? How can error, to me clear and patent, be reconciled with inbreathed influences of a Divine teaching which indirectly profess to be free from error, absolutely and necessarily. Is not the promise of the guidance into every form of truth (John xvi. 13) proved by investigations to be a promise, either given and not realized, or given subject to conditions and limitations that experience is beginning now distinctly to teach, and the philosophy of history is at last tending convincingly to disclose?

With this form of scepticism I need scarcely say every true and tender heart among us would almost instinctively deal in the spirit of gentleness and forbearance. Scepticism is the appointed temptation, and there are doubters of this class, who have owned, not by words merely but by deeds,—precautions taken in respect of those dependent on them and dear to them,—that they knew and felt it to be such, even when, in respect of themselves, they were consciously yielding to it. The influence of such men is often dangerous, more dangerous sometimes even than that of the other classes

which I shall mention, but the men themselves ought to be and must be objects of our truest sympathy, and of our most tender Christian solicitude. Too often the plainly dangerous results to the young and inexperienced of contact with such minds have led good men to speak with severity, and denounce without discrimination. But this harshness has re-acted. It did not draw the just line of distinction between the poor tempted spirit, and its hapless and often mischievous outpourings and speculations; and the result has been on the part of many, adherence, so warm, that at length to the first temptation a more grievous one is added,—the temptation of leading opinion and guiding thought. And then the declension to the form of doubt of which I shall next speak,—immoral doubt, is easy and certain, and teacher and pupil soon become both involved in a common moral ruin.

Mode of dealing with honest doubt. § 45. I will not presume, my dear brethren, to point out to you in what precise way or by what lines of argument either this or any of the other classes of doubters which I shall specify, are exactly to be approached. I feel that the practical experience of many of you is far greater than my own, and that in the exercise of your pastoral office you will have experimentally learnt much more than theory and speculation can suggest; still I will make bold humbly to record my opinion that the most hopeful way of dealing with all honest doubters when they

apply to us for guidance and support, is to teach them to reverse the mental process to which they have become habituated, and to reason, not from what is without, inwards, but rather from what is within, outwards. I will explain what I mean.

In cases of the more honest forms of doubt of which we are speaking the usual course has been to pass from doubtful and contested details, inward and upward, till the credibility of the writers, and the very reality of the inbreathed Spirit has come at first to be questioned and at last to be denied. Details and facts, in the doubter's estimate, first broke down, and then, in sad sequence, doctrines and principles followed. The progress has been from the outwork to the citadel. Our endeavour should be to teach and to suggest an exactly reversed course. We should try first to show how the great questions, the real problems of this and every age, find in the Word of God answers and solutions, which, from a mere intellectual point of view, are more credible and even philosophically consistent than any others that have been advanced. Let it be asked for instance, what account of the presence of sin in the world, and (to beings such as ourselves) of such a really inconceivable phenomenon as death, has yet been given that can stand an hour's investigation; and then let the solution of Scripture be considered, and with it all its profound harmonies of revelation in reference to the various subjects in logical or psychological alliance with that which has been specified. The result by

God's blessing, will often be found to be this. Conviction as to the truth of Scripture, in reference to the great questions, becomes gradually deeper and deeper. The testimony of the soul, aforesaid silenced, is now given, and persuasively given, upon all those subjects in which its testimony is ever felt to be most weighty and convincing. Sin is felt to be sin. The remedy is at last acknowledged to be one and one only. Hope takes the place of anxiety; meekness of self confidence. On the great questions all is well. Now lead gently outward. Admit difficulties and show them in the numberless details in which they have been thought to be found. The soul now heeds them not. Some it perceives yield at once; others its calmer wisdom reminds it cannot by the nature of the case be expected to be removed, though it also sees how a further knowledge of the fewest possible facts would effect the removal at once. What were once accumulating obstacles become now, in the reversed direction, at each step fewer and smaller, and remain, if they remain, only the monuments and head stones of doubts and trials now by the grace of God put out of sight for ever,—monuments of the anxious past that make the blessedness of the present more thankfully felt and realized.

On the three remaining classes I will not make any extended observations, as it is not, I fear, likely that those that compose them will apply to us for advice or comfort till far mightier agencies

than our poor human efforts have been at work in the heart. Still it may be useful to mention the three classes, as serving to direct our attention to states of opinion and feeling now existing and developing themselves around us, and as tending perhaps to aid us in that spiritual diagnosis which we are sometimes called upon to make in the exercise of our holy profession.

Scepticism § 46. If what I have just alluded to
of immoral may be called the scepticism of *honest*
doubt. doubt, the next and much more painful
 form of it may be called the scepticism of *immoral*
 doubt. To this class we must assign all those proud and self-confident spirits who seek to lead public opinion, and to take a prominent position in the so-called intellectual struggles of their own times, in reference to theological subjects. The active principle of their scepticism is, I fear, that pride of spirit and that feeling of antagonism to the teaching and discipline of the Church which seems to be a precursory part and portion of the predicted lawlessness of the world's last times. With such forms of doubt it is hard to profess any sympathy whatever. No thought is taken of Christ's weak ones; no consideration is shown for the many that stumble and are offended. Doubts, as they first present themselves, are not struggled with on the knees, but often almost welcomed, or, at best, received unchallenged, to be soon reproduced in forms made more attractive by the ability with which they are anew set forth; difficulties in

Scripture are enhanced; discrepancies exaggerated; fundamental doctrines, if not yet denied, are left endangered; innocent hopes and enthusiasms are brushed heartlessly aside; ancient consolations are ignored as untenable, or dismissed as nugatory. Such is the scepticism of what we may justly call *immoral* doubt,—self-confident, reckless, pitiless,—one of the saddest and gravest developments of the times in which we live, and of most threatening augury in reference to the Church of the Future.

The Scepticism of the worldly heart. § 47. Sad as this form is, there is another yet more dangerous, a scepticism closely allied to it in some points, yet in others presenting differences which seem to require for it a separate classification. We may specify it as the scepticism of worldliness and the worldly heart,—a scepticism that addresses itself to the so-called common sense of mankind. In the case of the last-mentioned class the appeal is made more to the intellect; here insinuations and doubts win their way by their assumed harmony with the results of experience and sound practical good sense.

In the case of doubters of this class, there is, however, nothing very intentional or deliberate in the propagation of opinion; there is no especial desire to proselytize; there is no studied display of argument. Things are rather taken as they are found; opinions are discussed more in their reference to society and general good order than to

anything higher or more enduring. The result is a worldliness of tone and feeling that is almost frightful in its amount and self-complacency. Everything spiritual seems to be estimated only in reference to its practical adaptations and coincidence, with social and material progress. The Church, our mother, is regarded only as a useful society for the suppression of vice, to be spoken well of as long as she attends to her practical work with sufficient deference to the current feelings of society; to be ridiculed or satirized whenever she attempts to act on the highest principles or shows any tendency towards an independent line of action. We, her ministers, are but deemed a kind of spiritual police, useful as long as occupied in the general maintenance of order, worse than useless, obstructive, mischievous, whenever we assert a fearless allegiance to our own true Master, or manifest any steady determination to abide by the doctrine and discipline of that Church which He purchased with His own blood. This is always the sure test. Whenever the Church speaks out, either as the inviolable guardian of the truth or as the enduring depositary of the delegated authority of Christ, then the true spirit of this worldly scepticism shows itself in all its repulsiveness; then we may recognize clearly and plainly the real nature of the active principle that animates and pervades the whole,—Erastian, secular, conventional, non-Christian. Perhaps the epithet non-Christian more truly designates the character of the

practical scepticism of which we now are speaking than any other. It is not anti-Christian, but non-Christian; it does not oppose the truth, but utilizes it just so far as it serves its purpose, and then rejects it when it becomes intractable. There is simply no recognition whatever of it in its characteristic of having been once for all delivered to the saints, and remaining, as it ever does remain, crystalline in form and character, unchangeable and unchanged.

Such is the scepticism that is now about us and around us on every side; it appeals to us elder men, because it appeals to that on which most of all we pride ourselves,—our common-sense. The young are attracted by the other forms I have alluded to; their age and their enthusiasms commonly lead them to more purely intellectual forms of doubt; *we* yield more to influences that claim to emanate from practical wisdom and experience.

My brethren, God forbid that we should ever become thus secularized in heart or feelings; God protect His heritage from such blight and such corruption. Yet it is our duty to be anxious for ourselves, and watchful. The scepticism of this third class, this scepticism of the world, has many able exponents; they lie on our study-tables, they find places in our shelves. We often listen to them because they speak to us with a sententious plausibility; we endure them because at times they seem to help us in practical matters, and secure for us at any rate some outward appearance of fair

play. But brethren, dear brethren, let us beware. The spirit of the world is the moving spirit of all; the trail of the serpent is on every green leaf. Let us beware, but also let us take heart. Many are now clearly realizing the true nature of the worldly tone and temper of some of the popular exponents of public opinion, and I trust that we, the clergy, will be among the first to feel this and to act upon it. God be praised, there is still amid all, much cause for comfort; there is a feeling in many that earth and earthliness is not to be the only motive principle in human action. In spite of all the secular influences about us there is still a more growing desire “to try the spirits whether they are of God,”¹ than there was a few years ago: ancient tests are becoming more freely used; ancient truths are being more brought home to us; many are discerning and plainly avowing that they do discern the deep truth of the Apostle’s warning to sensuous Corinth, that after all the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God,²—nay more that our own experiences show us that there is indeed a deep and dreadful truth in all those passages which set forth to us who the spiritual rulers of the world really are,³ who its prince and deity.⁴

The Scep- § 48. The last form of scepticism is
ticism of cor- one, into which almost every day’s ex-
ruption. perience shows us the third form is
 ever tending to pass—the scepticism of moral

¹ 1 John iv., 1. ² 1 Cor. i., 20. ³ Eph. vi., 12. ⁴ 2 Cor. iv., 4.

depravity and corruption. This is the last, worst, and most repulsive form. Non-christian principles have now passed into antichristian principles: selfishness has now become depravity; worldliness has become moral turpitude. The hapless ones who belong to this class doubt and propagate their doubts because it is their very instinct to do so; because they would fain force the hope on their own souls and on those of others that the Gospel-sentence is not that by which they will be judged hereafter, that the declarations of Scripture are but those of a time and age with which the present has but few and remote affinities.

Otherwise, what means this ready reception of the denial of the literal accuracy of Scripture or of unending penal chastisements, save that it is the interest of many to believe it to be valid? Why this sympathy with the impugnors of received opinions, save the presence of a lingering fear that those opinions may be true, and the consciousness that for the merest outward peace of mind they must be silenced and stifled. Set, my brethren, on the one hand, the frightful revelations that, from time to time, are forced upon us of systematic depravities, hardly veiled by that civilization of which they are the issues and results; and set, on the other, the readiness with which so many who have obviously no speculative tendencies, and no proper knowledge of the subjects under discussion, take up and defend latitudinarian principles; and then consider whether there is not, must not be, a con-

nexion between these things of a very close and abiding nature. Such probabilities, at any rate, we to whom the ministry of reconciliation is entrusted must seriously ponder in many of the exercises of our office. Many a case of doubt will be found to resolve itself into one of secret sin, and ere we can bring back peace and hope to the struggling spirit we shall often have to reveal to it the corruption of the body, and (with God's assisting Spirit) to teach it repentance ere we can bring it to behold the truth.

Progressive character of disbelief. § 49. Such are some of the principal forms of doubt and misbelief now existing in the very bosom of Christian society. Such the general nature of the principles now most prominently arrayed against Catholic truth. That the combination they now present is frightful, no one can deny, and that the future will see that combination much more consolidated in principle and united in action is, I believe, certainly to be expected. The history of opinion and the sure word of prophecy both point in the same direction.

The history of opinion tells us, that though there ever have been and ever will be changes and oscillations in the subjects of speculative interest, and in the phases of current belief, yet that whenever distinct principles have emerged, those principles, for good or for evil, have remained operative and energizing until they have prepared the way for other and wider principles, into which they

then pass as parts only of a more developed whole. And if this be the teaching of speculative history, most-assuredly it is the distinct declaration of prophecy. "Evil men shall grow worse and worse"¹ is the burden of all apostolic prophecy; increase of knowledge and decrease of faith are the appointed signs of the approaching end; apostacy, at first isolated and defensive, but afterwards, when "that which letteth"² is giving way, frightfully aggregated and aggressive, will usher in the advent of the succouring and avenging Lord.

All these things stand written and will be verified to the letter. It is worse then than idle to hope that the evil spirit of misbelief will in any way be changed, except for the worse. The present dangerous principles in the criticism and interpretation of Scripture will only give place to broader and more daring generalizations; and just as the early ages of the Church were the blessed witnesses of the appointed developments of her fundamental doctrines, so will the last ages behold the issues and unfoldings of deliberate antichristian error. We must prepare then, plainly prepare for collision and conflict; trying times are drawing near; yet as I have already said, there is much even in the present state of things to cheer and to sustain.

We may draw comfort from the very fact that we are becoming more alive to the difficulties and dangers that surround us. Our very conviction, that mighty agencies are now at work everywhere,

¹ 2 Tim. iii. 13. ² 2 Thess. ii. 6.

that changes are becoming more abrupt, separations more distinct, and the necessities of preparation for conflict and collision greater every day, is in itself a ground for comfort. Above all we may see hope in the many striking and suggestive tendencies of Christian feeling and Christian practice which are now disclosing themselves, and are now beginning to arrest the attention of all serious and far-seeing men.

Present Christian tendencies. § 50. Let us verify all this a little more in detail by now proceeding to consider two or three of these general tendencies, and their favorable and unfavorable characteristics. We have hitherto been engaged in the morbid anatomy of scepticism and error, let us now pass onward to the analysis of what is more healthful and reassuring.

Tendency to united action § 51. The first and most prevailing tendency in present Christian society is the tendency to more united action, and, where possible, to inclusion and aggregation. The tendency is by no means devoid of mystery, or without much spiritual meaning. It is the beginning of that gradual breaking up into two large camps, which prophecy seems to teach us to expect. That there are among ourselves up-gathering forces acting persistently and continuously; that the good are becoming more drawn together; that minor differences are being put out of sight, and points of union kept steadily in view, is now a matter of almost daily observation. There are

signs too of corresponding aggregations among the worldly and the evil, at present much more obscure, yet sufficient to invest with deep interest the gradual gatherings together of the faithful and the true.

We may see this tendency, exemplified in our Church Congresses, in our approaching Diocesan synods, in Church Institutions, in the Oxford Declaration, in the awakened interest in synodal, united, or collective action, displayed not only in every Diocese but almost in every Rural-deanery in the kingdom. We may also expect it to increase. Such movements commonly increase by the very nature of things, rarely ceasing till they have merged into the change to which they have been all along leading or contributing. The gathering snow rolls onward with accumulating mass until it bounds over the precipice or is broken up amid the boulders of the plain.

Tendency § 52. This tendency however is conditioned by another which is perhaps quite as clearly defined, and certainly as well deserving of our consideration. It is the tendency to practical work, to real hearty work. We see it, thank God, in almost every parish; we observe it in the systematic way in which large urban districts are spiritually provided for by those to whom they are intrusted; we may mark it in great efforts like those now made in the Diocese of London. Ragged schools, book-hawkings, midnight missions, open-air preachings,—all are honorable testimonies of the deepened interest in

the practical work of the Church that is now felt by all classes within her pale.

Combining then the two preceding statements we may say, that union in practical matters is a very decided characteristic of Christian society at the present time.

Result of these tenden- § 53. Is it, however, a characteristic of decidedly unmixed good? Perhaps *cies.* not; there are new tendencies to which it gives rise which cannot be contemplated without some anxiety.

One of these is, as we might have anticipated, a growing apathy to distinctive teaching and a clearly diminishing sensibility to the necessity of adhering to definite doctrines and confessions of faith. It is the obvious tendency of the practical worker to underrate these things; Christ is preached, and therein he rightly rejoices and will rejoice; it is enough for him. *How* Christ is preached he has not always time, and does not always seek opportunity to enquire. Hence a growing liberalism even among really sound and true members of our Church. Work seems everything; the furrow must be completed; whether it be quite straight or not is to be deemed a matter of less moment.

And so no doubt it is. But let it not meanwhile be forgotten that the amount of work will itself be diminished if the principles on which the work is to be done are not clearly agreed on. There may be general union, but it will not be really co-operative union, and those who are most opposed to us

will not be slow to avail themselves of the opportunity. The laxity of the one party will make it an easy victim to the scepticism of the other, and error will creep in among ourselves where it may be least anticipated. There are some symptoms that dangers of this kind are increasing, and that in the controversies that are fast coming on we shall suffer unintentionally from those with whom we may be in general union. It is well to bear in mind that Theology is not merely a matter of common sense, or even of instinctive feelings. It involves fixed principles, definite teaching, just discrimination, sound deduction. We need both it and all that it involves now more than ever, and it will be wise for us not to let our sympathies with the practical lead us in any way to undervalue the benefits of sound dogmatic teaching, or tempt us to give up to Christian labour that portion of our time which might rightly be reserved for Christian learning.

Leading events of the current year. § 54. I may now, I think, suitably bring before you those subjects or events which have principally marked the history of our Church during the present year. What has been said will perhaps enable us to form a sounder estimate of their general character and of the influence they are likely to exercise on the Church of the Future.

Four subjects, each of which I will notice separately though briefly, appear more especially to claim our thoughts,—Subscription to Articles of

Faith, the recent judgment of the Privy Council, the Oxford Declaration, and the Synodical Condemnation of *Éssays* and *Reviews*; to which we may perhaps add a fifth, the present state of opinion in reference to the Burial Service. Each of these subjects will tend to illustrate or exemplify what has been already laid down, and will serve very usefully to test the justice of our general positions.

Subscription to Articles. § 55. On the first subject, Subscription, it will be advisable, for obvious reasons, not to say more than may be necessary for the calm consideration of what hereafter may be proposed by those authorized to offer recommendation.

If we consider the general question simply and fairly, it will not be easy to arrive at any other conclusion than this,—that, whether Subscription to Articles and Formularies be a desirable or an undesirable thing in the abstract, to relax it at a time of great spiritual unsettlement is at any rate, in the first place to recognize the right of dissentients from the present teaching of the Church of England to occupy her pulpits, and in the second place to give some indirect sanction to such dissentient teaching, or at any rate to imply that it deserves a general hearing.

Otherwise why raise the subject? Not one in a hundred of simple, loyal, believers has hitherto felt any serious difficulty as to Subscription in the forms in which it now is required. Some over-

sensitive minds there always have been and ever will be that give a literal stringency to words, which either does not belong to them, or which the change of times and circumstances has clearly and confessedly modified. This scrupulous minority has, however, taken but little part in recent agitation. The desire for a relaxation in Subscription has come, in the first place, from mainly honest men, who conscientiously believing that the current teaching of the Church is in some points too narrow, and in others mistaken, have desired to be able to say so without the imputation of disloyalty or dishonesty. They have, however, been largely recruited by others whose secret motives for joining them have been less creditable either to heart or head. There have been sceptics of other classes and of other shades of opinion. Weak, simply weak, although well-intentioned liberalism, latent lawlessness, Felix-like aversion to the telling home-truths of England's pulpits, consciously-felt transgression and corruption, have all been on the side of the removal of restrictions, partly from instinct, partly from less excusable propensions. This complex and motley party has received a most welcome assistance from a third class of whom one would wish only to speak with respect and even with sympathy,—sound and faithful Churchmen of gentle and concessive spirit, who by no means disapproving of Subscription in the abstract, still feel that the terms under which it is now exacted might be beneficially changed,

and obstructions removed which once might have been necessary and justifiable, but now, it is judged, have become stumbling-blocks to the over-scrupulous.

It seems in the highest degree probable that this combination will prevail, and that Subscription in its present form will be modified. And perhaps even we who may not sympathize with the movements generally, and certainly not with its most prominent supporters, will be wise to accept the modifications, provided the simpler and more inclusive forms required by our Church are left wholly intact, and change only introduced where the declaration may practically involve more of a political than of an ecclesiastical reference.

Here, however, even the most liberal among us will be wise to take our deliberate stand. Agreement to use faithfully and loyally a book of Common Prayer which has no equal in all the Liturgies of Christendom, and a frank avowal that both it and our Articles of Religion are agreeable to the Word of God, are declarations which ought to be exacted from every one that would serve at our altars, and which it is our duty, by all lawful means, to uphold as absolutely essential to the unity, and even to the existence of our National Church. It has been well observed, that in the declarations to which I have referred a very minimum of consent is required.¹ To give up that

¹ See an excellent Letter by Archdeacon Hale, entitled *Clerical Subscription*, pp. 11, 12.

minimum, a minimum, which, as it is has been justly said, “commends itself by the wisdom and moderation of its language,”¹ and against which no serious objections have ever been made, is simply to yield to interested sophistry, and to commit an act of deliberate disloyalty to our Mother Church which can neither be excused nor palliated.

Recent decision of the Privy Council.

§ 56. On the character of the recent decision of the Committee of Privy Council, calm and serious people seem now to be, for the most part, agreed. Its very limited scope is now becoming more clearly seen. The Court from which it emanated was not concerned with either the general characteristics or prevailing tendencies of the mischievous volume that was implicated. It plainly disavows all such concern. Its province was to decide whether specific, isolated, passages cited from the volume were at such variance with our Articles and Formularies, that they involved the writer or writers in the *penal* consequences which an inferior court had decided was their due. With the technical decision thus limited and restricted many may not feel ultimately dissatisfied. It was a question whether certain isolated sentences had incurred heavy penalties,—and such a question, if the case be one of difficulty, will almost always involve a minimum of unconscious bias in favour of

¹ See *Report of the Committee of Convocation on Clerical Subscription*, p. 4. The whole of this valuable document deserves careful consideration.

the accused. Thus far then, common considerations may lead us at any rate not to feel surprised at the judgment, though we may also individually feel, with the two Archbishops, that we could not, even under the narrowed circumstances of the issue, have honestly concurred in it.

Here, however, we may justly pause to enquire whether a Court that has to decide not on, but with reference to, doctrines of the gravest import, can, with any degree of safety or any degree of loyalty to the highest interests, confine itself so completely to isolated passages as to refuse to consider the illustrations which are supplied by other portions of the inculcated work. Is the *animus* of the writer, when fairly deducible from his own words, to be ignored in decisions on which the peace of mind and even the salvation of thousands depend? If it be answered, that the rules of the Court preclude any such expansions, that it is a strictly legal tribunal and must remain so whatever may be the subject matter that comes before it, then let the reply be,—strictly legal let it be in every aspect, and let all men see it and know it. Let not the presence of the highest Ecclesiastical Authorities lend to such a Court the deceptive appearance of being a tribunal which can decide authoritatively upon what does or what does not involve definite spiritual error. Either let the usages and constitution of the Court be modified or changed when it has to deal with questions of Theology; or,—better and simpler process,—let

the Court divest itself of all appearance of being what it is *not*, a Court of final spiritual appeal, or of having, which it has *not*, any authority to settle matters of Faith. We Churchmen shall then learn to estimate its decisions at what they are really worth. We shall respect them and bow to them with all loyalty in the matters to which they properly appertain; but we shall certainly not disquiet ourselves by supposing that the opinions or *obiter dicta* on fundamental doctrines like the Inspiration of Scripture and the Eternity of Divine Punishments, which such a Court may interpolate in its decisions, are in any degree of more value than those of any equal number of intelligent laymen, who might think it desirable to convey to us their views upon subjects with which they were, almost of necessity, imperfectly acquainted.

The Oxford Declaration. § 57. Our judgment on the third subject before us, the Oxford Declaration, will not improbably be modified by the view we may now be disposed to take of that which led to it,—the decision of the Committee of Privy Council, or rather, to speak more accurately, the opinions expressed and implied in that decision, on the Inspiration of Scripture and the Eternity of Divine Punishments. It was not so much the decision, as what was involved and implied in it that called forth that widely-signed document.

With every desire to regard the Judgment candidly and fairly, and as delivered under limitations which at first were not sufficiently appreciated, it is

plainly impossible for us to deny that there are passages in it relative to Inspiration, and more particularly, to the Eternity of Divine Punishments, not apparently called for by the legal necessities of the case, which, as emanating from a small Court including our three highest Ecclesiastical Authorities, might not unreasonably cause a serious and widely-spread alarm.

It is quite possible that, in the first shock and excitement, greater authority was assigned to the expressions of the Judgment in reference to spiritual things than it at all claimed for itself. The Court, as we have already said, neither has nor had any jurisdiction or authority to settle matters of Faith, and it re-affirms this in its decision. Still expressions were made use of and comments introduced which did, to all appearance, bear seriously upon matters of Faith; and this must be well and clearly borne in mind if we would form a really just judgment on the Declaration.

Furthermore, it must also be remembered that there had not been any really authoritative expression of the judgment of the Church, in her more collective aspect, on a volume to which five of her ministers had contributed. It is also probable that none was anticipated. At a time then of great emergency, and with really little prospect of any authoritative action on the part of the Church, the necessity of bearing individual testimony to the endangered truth, and thus far, of clearing the main body of the Church of complicity with their

five erring brethren, seemed sufficient, in the eyes of many, to justify the course that was ultimately pursued. It was deemed a crisis, greater I think than it has eventually proved to be; and a course of action was adopted, which certainly nothing but such a crisis could in any way be supposed to justify. I do not like to say that there was actually *panic*, for the word conveys some tinge of reproach and censure, but there was a sudden disquietude, not unmixed with indignation, which rose to a height far beyond what has hitherto been witnessed in the later scenes of our Church's history.

With the Declaration came the gradual subsidence. Those who were not borne away by the first outburst, either more tranquilly joined the movement, or even in some cases tried to stay it. The struggle in the minds of many between the due recognition of Church order and the duty of personally confessing the faith at a critical time then became more apparent. Many, though sympathizing with the general feeling of those who signed, still felt that the specific words of the Declaration were open to question, as tending to introduce new definitions; many again began still more clearly to see that the evil was less than it had at first appeared to be, and that the facility of publicly teaching error was in no sensible degree increased. Thus though above 11,000 signed (about 300 from our own Diocese) a very large number considered it their duty to abstain from

taking part in the movement. It is, however, very cheering to observe that, as far as can be inferred from the published letters and pamphlets, a very excellent feeling prevailed between those who did and those who did not sign. Those who did were too just and too charitable to tax their brethren with indifference to the truth, and those who did not, with the exception of a few whose sympathies were obviously with the impugned writers, candidly avowed the serious nature of the emergency. Thus by the great mercy of God to His disquieted Church a movement of a grave and perhaps unprecedented character has been permitted to arise, to take its course, and to exercise its effects, without having violated Christian charity, or in any degree having impaired the unity of feeling on fundamental questions that has been gradually growing up between the two great parties in the Church. Is it presumptuous to trace in all this a sign that zeal for God's truth, even when it displays itself in an unauthorized form, may still not in all cases fall short of His favour and blessing?

Warnings suggested by the Declaration. § 58. At any rate let us not fail to observe two warnings that the circumstances of this Declaration certainly bring home both to us and to others.

We Churchmen may learn from the whole a lesson not lightly to be forgotten,—that even in the most trying times faith and patience fail not to bring with them their own reward. Could those

who signed the Declaration have foreknown that two or three months afterwards Convocation would have authoritatively condemned the implicated volume, nearly all would have been content to wait.

Our statesmen may also profitably observe how dangerous it may prove to the wholesome bond that now unites the Church and the State if the legislature should ever interpose in matters relating to Christian Faith. There is a spirit now abroad, partly due to the aggregative tendency in the Church of which I have spoken, partly to things deeper and at present less distinctly revealed, which would, on any serious ground of alarm, not scruple to precipitate a separation of the Church from the State,—a separation in which both would be grievously the sufferers, a separation to be deprecated and deplored by every reasonable Christian man. Such a spirit plainly there is; serious words but lately seriously spoken have disclosed it; the inner feelings of our own hearts make us in some degree conscious of it. Let us then all learn patience and forbearance, and not permit the salutary lessons of the Oxford Declaration to pass away unheeded.

Above all, whatever we may think, we shall be wise not to speak slightingly of the number of those who signed the Declaration, and not to dwell upon the supposed difference between the mental qualifications of the many that signed the Declaration, and of the few that took part in the Judgment.

Among those 11,000 signatures are to be found the names of many of the wisest and most true-hearted men among us. All deserve our respect; all, in some measure, our gratitude; none our ridicule or our satire. The movement was great and important, and, in the future history of our Church, the calm scene at Lambeth Palace on the 12th of May will not be lightly spoken of or forgotten.

*Synodical
Condemna-
tion of
Essays and
Reviews.* § 59. The fourth subject to which I shall now advert is perhaps the most important of all,—the Synodical Condemnation of Essays and Reviews. The real importance of this most rightful course is now beginning to be felt everywhere. The calmness and sobriety of the Report on which the Condemnation was more immediately founded, the prudent and temperate words of the thoroughly Catholic judgment,—and most of all, the fact itself that the Church has authoritatively spoken, and cleared herself before angels and men of all complicity with error, all tended to make the Church's breaking of her long silence at once solemn, impressive, and significant.

At first the real importance of the judgment was hardly properly appreciated. It was thought and it was urged that the Condemnation would tend to give only fresh vitality to a mischievous production that was fast passing out of notice. Many true Churchmen honestly doubted the wisdom, though they did not doubt the justice of the course. Now, however, feelings and opinions are obviously much

changing. Many of those who differed from us at the time are now honestly rejoicing that their anticipations did not prove correct, and with the same good Christian feeling that showed itself at a most anxious time in both Houses of Convocation,—I speak not of what took place elsewhere,—are not obscurely indicating that they are even in sentiment with us now, as they were in heart with us always.

It is now to be seen and felt that no mere antagonism to the decisions of the Highest Court of Appeal was contemplated or intended. The Court, from its mainly secular character and the narrow issue to which it confined itself, could not take cognizance of that which it was the most solemn duty of the Church to note and to condemn—the obvious *animus* of the writers, and the thinly disguised tendencies of the self-evident combination. What the Court could not do, Convocation did. The Church spoke through her Synod. Patiently she waited, in conformity with wisely-taken counsels, till the legal decisions had been arrived at; when the law had performed its outward part then she spoke. And that voice will not soon die into silence. The worldly have ridiculed, the corrupt have scoffed,—but ridicule and scoff only poorly disguise their real anxiety lest the principles of Catholic Truth should ultimately prevail, and our Church should retain that sway over the hearts of our people for which error and selfishness and worldliness have been of late so eagerly contending.

The Burial Service. § 60. A few closing remarks to this portion of my address may be added in reference to a subject which was much considered and discussed last year,—the Burial Service.

From what has passed this year it would seem probable that now, if any thing be done, it must be by the agency of a Commission. No remedy of the alleged grievance has yet been suggested which seemed so fully to meet all the difficulties of the case as to deserve being formally proposed to the legislature. Either then the whole question must remain in abeyance, or it must be given over to the consideration of an appointed body. This much, however, seems clearly to have transpired, that the great majority of the Clergy are very distinctly opposed to any change in the service. I confess that I concur with them, and am glad that our Metropolitan made this condition in his general assent to the appointment of a Commission. We must then be content to wait for the final adjustment of this difficult question. Each one of us, probably, who has well considered the subject will be quite ready to admit that very serious objections may be urged against any remedy that has yet been proposed, and that in the end we shall have to adopt as our remedy that against which the objections seem to be fewest.

What that remedy may be, can only be arrived at by very full and dispassionate enquiry. On such a point we may very reasonably differ, and each entertain our own private opinions. I do not wish

to obtrude my own, but will only simply say that I share in the general feeling of the Ruridecanal Meeting which considered with me this subject last year,—that the least objectionable remedy is to be looked for in the *law* of the matter, and that in the case of an open and notorious sinner and of whose repentance no man could testify (a very important condition) legal procedure against a clergyman for not reading the Service might be restrained by the Bishop, if, on due investigation, it was proved clearly that the case was of the extreme kind above specified. It is I believe doubted by very competent writers whether, even as the law at present stands, a Bishop is obliged, under such circumstances, to proceed against a clergyman who has omitted the Service; and it certainly would be desirable that this point should be cleared up first. There are of course obvious objections to this remedy, on the ground that it would be making the clergyman the judge. Still, if the conditions were strictly specified, viz., that it was to be only in “the case of an open and notorious sinner, and of whose repentance no man could testify,” few would ever dare to take the responsibility unless the case was really most extreme, and unless they saw that the moral sense of the whole parish would be with them. This right feeling or, as I have called it, this moral sense of a parish is not a thing lightly to be violated. There are cases with which I am acquainted, where the clergyman has felt so strongly that he would have outraged

that moral sense if he read the Service, that he has taken all risks and omitted it, and has found that the effect on the parish was of a most salutary and edifying nature. Though we may inwardly approve of such a boldness, I yet cannot say that I either advise or suggest it. It is clearly our duty to conform to the law. If the law be doubtful or objectionable we may rightly press for authoritative definition or authoritative change, but till that definition or change become sanctioned by law, we must be patient and wait.

Alterations in the Lectionary. § 61. If the subject is considered by a Royal Commission it does not seem improbable, from what transpired in the House of Lords last July, that the Commission may be empowered also to consider the Table of Lessons. There seems a general feeling that this would not be undesirable, and it may be added that it would not, technically considered, be unsafe. I believe it is a fact, though not generally known, that our present Calendar and Lectionary really rests for its authority on an Act of Parliament in the reign of George the Second.¹ The change from Old Style to New Style necessitated the repeal of the existing Calendar, and its re-enactment with a few slight alterations, as we now have it. Thus those who are justly sensitive as to any revision of the Prayer Book, and who might fear that this was but the little end of the wedge, may fall back on the technical fact that the procedure need not

¹ Stephens' *History of Prayer Book*, p. 274.

really involve anything more serious than the repeal of a special and comparatively recent Act of Parliament.

I have now, I think, touched on all leading topics connected with the Church of the Present, and have only to pass onward to the last portion of my responsible task, and to endeavour to make a few comments that may be of present practical use to us all in reference to the Church of the Future.

No serious man among us can forbear casting his eyes forward. No graver thinker can repress the natural desire to connect what now is with what seems certainly coming, nor, while thus looking from the anxious Present to the apparently more anxious and lowering Future, can fail also to desire to consider how best we may prepare ourselves and others for the dangers and trials that appear to loom large and mysterious the more earnestly we gaze into the nearer but still clouded distance.

Let us devote a short time to the consideration of these grave subjects.

PART III.

FUTURE CHURCH PROSPECTS.

Serious nature of future prospects. § 62. My general comments to you have hitherto been of a hopeful nature, and hopeful they still will be. Yet it is impossible not to see and feel that we must prepare for trials, doubtings, fallings away, and even antagonisms, far beyond any of which we have yet had experience. Of the forms of scepticism which I noticed not one is likely to change except for the worse. Of the false teachings now rife everywhere none appear to contain within them any elements that might lead us to hope for gradual returns hereafter to Catholic Truth. Every thing seems steadily progressive, and also steadily divergent. So much so that at times the anxious thinker can also fancy he sees how the settled system of error (Ephes. iv. 14) is gradually developing, and can almost catch glimpses of the dreadful issues to which it is steadily tending.

Present assaults on the Faith only preparatory. § 63. I rejoice to observe that sober people are gradually becoming conscious of the certain fact,—that the present assaults on the Faith are but preparatory to something much more formidable and desperate.

Can any far-seeing Christian man doubt that the present invalidations of the authority of the Holy Scriptures, and the direct or implied denials of the Eternity of Divine Punishments are but preliminary and precursory to more systematic denials of some of the leading articles of the Nicene Faith? Would there be all this trouble about comparatively insignificant details in history or chronology if there was not much more in the back-ground? To endeavour to show that Scripture involves errors in details is to prepare the way very plausibly for the suspicion that it may also, here and there, speak a little more strongly upon matters of faith, final adjustments, and ultimate issues, than the sequel will substantiate. What more convenient than to illustrate this by a doctrine which is in plainest opposition to the hopes and fears of the natural and worldly,—nay on which it seems excusable for minds of far higher and purer stamp to entertain some feelings even of serious doubt? The very doctrine which might best reconcile unwary hearts to the suspicion that our Master's words must be a little toned down, and that His teaching must be supposed to be a little tinged with the peculiarities of His own age and nation, is the one almost instinctively selected for discussion, and for modification or dilution.

Well, and see we not what must inevitably follow? Has not one of the recent assailants of the authority of the Pentateuch given us a plain hint? Has not one of the most mournful works

that has ever been written by one bearing the name of a Christian,—a recent life of Our Lord,—shown us clearly enough what must, by the very nature of the case, next come under consideration? My brethren, I tremble when, thus in God's House, and thus before Him who, even as He has promised, is now present in the midst of us,—I tremble, when thus I specify what must be and what will be: the doctrine that will next be deliberately and determinately assailed will be the Divinity of Our Lord Jesus Christ. The blessed definition, God of God, Light of Light, will ere very long be the subject of many a discussion.

Anticipated § 64. Mark how every thing leads
denials of up to it. If the Jesus Christ of the
Our Lord's Gospels taught no more than, in a
Divinity. sublimated form, the teaching of His own times,—if the hour of the final judgment is not the only point on which a daring philosophy may endeavour to show the holy omniscient Lord was ignorant,—if our meaner hopes and still meaner fears may be all mustered up to try and prove that on one point at least He said too much, then what will be the estimate of His Divinity? Observe how the proud Pelagian estimate of human nature, now so current, has already prepared and led the way for settled doubts on the nature and efficacies of the Atonement, and how the temptation of the natural heart to deny its own inborn sin will lead it, almost logically, to denials of redemption by the blood of the Son of God, and

will obliterate all recognition of infinite, and so divine, agencies in the sacrifice. Consider too again how with the fuller denial of the Eternity of Divine Punishments, one of the *heart's* deepest arguments for the Lord's Divinity,—the infinite nature of His Atonement, must necessarily be impaired and shaken; how all at last will fall together under the systematic destructiveness of modern doubt.

But it will not be all at once. O no! The anxious and startled enquirer will be long left with lingering hopes. Just as the inspiration of the Written Word has not yet been absolutely and in every sense denied, so at first the Divinity of the Living Word will not, in every sense, be pronounced inadmissible. A residuum, such, it will be said, as the great and the good in every age have had some share in, will, for a while, be left to allay the anxieties of the neophyte. Some clouds of glory, to soothe the enthusiastic, will yet be permitted to robe that kingly form; some sanctities of teaching will yet be conceded to prevent the utter revolt of spirit that might be shown, even by poor human reason, when it was tampered with too far.

At present modern denials of Our Lord's Divinity have been implied rather than avowed. They have been left naturally to follow from results already arrived at. Speculations on human nature in reference to Original sin, on the one hand, or to our future destiny on the other, have all plainly involved inferences as to the nature and essence of

the Atonement. Doubts on the Scriptures have left the denial of the Divinity, both of Him who spoke by them, and of Him of whom they speak, a matter of mere logical consequence. Nothing remains but, now that the premises are laid down, boldly to draw the conclusion. But that conclusion will not yet be drawn. Denial will come first from another side and in a more unveiled form, and when it has gained sufficient reception in the poor doubting soul, then denials from all other premises will combine with it, and the sevenfold occupancy of the parable will be realized, and the ruin complete.

Special form of the denial § 65. This more overt form of denial will probably soon disclose itself. There seems some reason for expecting it in the form of an invalidation of the initial truth, the Lord's Miraculous Conception.

Already attempts have been made to represent the Miraculous Conception as a theological statement little more than synonymous with Incarnation; already it has been asked how such a mystery could have any preservative effect on our race; already it has been hinted that such a so-called mechanical immunity from original sin would vitiate the exemplary relations of our Lord's life, and minimize the moral value of His obedience; already, with a yet further boldness, one of the Evangelists, even he whom the Lord loved, has been claimed as not only being silent on this blessed truth, but as making the common footing of Redeemer and

redeemed (“as He is so are we in this world”) the very foundation of all his teaching,—it being conveniently forgotten that if there be one of the sacred writers who was moved, more especially than the rest, to reveal our Lord’s unity with the Eternal Father, that one is St. John the Divine. Such things have already been said; at present only obscurely and tentatively, in newspaper letters, in fleeting tracts, and in castaway pamphlets; but they have been said, and they may serve to warn us of the ground that will probably ere long be taken by the impugners of the Lord’s Divinity. It is but what we might expect. This denial of a special supernatural truth is but the obvious issue of that general denial of the supernatural with which we have of late been so familiar, and which was justly noted in the recent report of the Upper House of Convocation as one of the distinctive features of the unhappy volume then under consideration: all things tending to one end, all parts and portions of precursory antichristian error.

Final issue of anti-christian error. § 66. But will the denial of our blessed Lord’s Divinity be the last issue of modern speculation and worldly error?

By no means. The personality of the Holy and Eternal Spirit now only inferentially, will then be more distinctly denied, and on principles, which, though familiar to the student of modern German philosophy, are as yet but little known among ourselves. Nor will denial stop there; the last

development of pure Antichristianism extends yet further. It was foreseen and foretold by an Apostle, and it is summed up in the awful definition, 'He is Antichrist, that denieth the *Father* and the Son.'¹ And of that frightful development there are baleful and ominous signs even now in the speculations of our own times. Pagan impersonations of the ideas of the past have been dwelt upon, as showing tendencies of the human mind similarly to impersonate and deify what are but the ideas of the present. It has been hinted that as it has fared with Paganism, so must it fare with Christianity. Already it has been subtly argued that the very idea of personality limits and circumscribes that which intuition teaches must be uncircumscribed and illimitable, and that Nicene and Constantinopolitan theologies have tended to lower that which they sought to magnify and define. Even now such thoughts, shrouded and concealed, may be just seen in the dreary background of many poor erring hearts that hardly yet recognize the presence of the impious inmate, but yet bewray it by their prepossessions. The gathering doubts upon the subject of a special Providence, the difficulties felt in the conception of definite divine interpositions, the queried efficacies of prayers to the God of Seasons, all are intimations of the gradual and silent approach of man's last and uttermost impiety,—the denial of the personality of his Maker. When that denial

¹ 1 John ii. 22.

takes a defined and settled form, then the cup will be full; Antichrist will be revealed indeed; his session will have commenced; selfishness, worldliness will welcome their true representative; disobedience and lawlessness will bow before their own impersonation. Night and day will see the 'How long,' 'How long,' of His suffering and, it may be, persecuted Church rise heavenward to the Lord,—and then at length that which we daily pray for will be vouchsafed, that which angelic prophecy has specified will be fulfilled; and with real and material circumstances strangely at variance with the vague spiritualism of modern expectation,—He who was taken up from the eyes of Apostles into heaven will so, *in like manner*, descend.² * * * *

Present duty § 67. If this indeed be so, if the
in reference doubts and trials of the present, their
to coming more obvious tendencies, and their
dangers. hastening developments, all contribute to the feeling that this delineation of the Future and the trials of the Church of the Future may not prove wholly imaginary—if there be any truth in any such anticipations, the plain question now comes home to us, what is our present duty, how can we best meet the dangers that seem coming, how best fore-arm ourselves and others against these anticipated assaults on our common Faith.

The answer, dear brethren, is not difficult: we must bring more and more home to our own hearts

¹ Rev. vi. 10. ² Acts i. 2.

and the hearts of those who hear us both the Personal and the Written Word,—we must make the word of God more fully felt to be what it is, we must bring Him who gave that word, and who speaks in that word more into the daily thoughts and communings of ourselves and others. We must endeavour to live more ‘as seeing Him who is invisible.’¹

I say, my brethren, and I say advisedly that we must bring more home to the heart both the Lord and His Gospel,—if in the evil day we would do all and stand. It is to the heart, the heart with its sympathies, the heart with its secretly felt though often disavowed conviction of sin, that we, as God’s ministers, shall be wise to address ourselves. Appeals to the mere reason do but little; knowledge often puffs up, while love and sympathy edify. By this I do not mean, for a moment, that we should give up our Christian learning or desist from our appeals to it. We want it more now, far more, than ever. But what I mean is, that I do not think mere discussion on the present debated subjects, on the nature and limits of Inspiration or the duration of Divine Punishments, will do our people in any degree the good which may be done by so bringing home the Scriptures to the heart, so teaching them, so unfolding their meanings, so demonstrating their blessed unity and coherence, that to doubt their Inspiration in its truest sense, becomes as impossible as to doubt the presence of

¹ Heb. xi. 27.

the principle of life within ourselves. We cannot define what it is, but we are as sure that it is present, as we are sure of our own personal identity.

Hence it is, that I think public discussions on these difficult subjects are much to be deprecated. Unguarded words fall from us,—which are often long treasured up and clung to, though we ourselves may retract and lament them. Those who have had experience will all alike bear witness, that the proper controversial discussion of these subjects requires a fulness of knowledge, a calmness, and a power of reasoning, which are vouchsafed only to few. But we the many, my dear brethren, have our mission, and I know not that in some senses it is not a higher one than that of the practised controversialist or the well-armed defender of the Faith; ‘Knowing the terror of the Lord we persuade men.’¹ Calmly estimating the dangers that are around us, and wisely foreseeing those that are yet to come, we endeavour so to teach and so to preach, so to influence the life and practice, as to make all appeals to the mere human reason that doubt and disbelief may put forward, simply harmless and nugatory.

Practical § 68. Permit me to bring my remarks to a close with a little homely and practical advice on the ways in which we may most profitably confirm our people in their faith, both in the Lord who redeemed them and in the Scriptures which He has given for our learning.

¹ 2 Cor. v. 11

We have presumed to dwell on the system of error; let us now speak somewhat on the mystery of godliness, and see how mine may be met by counter-mine, and how practical belief, faith working by love, will most surely prove to us what the Apostle has declared it to be,¹ a shield, from off which all the fiery darts, the doubts and the insinuations of reckless thinkers, or of trying times, will fall quenched and blunted.

First as to the Written Word, and the best heart teaching on the subject of the Inspiration of the Scriptures.

Inspiration of Scripture to be shown practically. § 69. I have already spoken incidentally on this topic, and little more is necessary than to expand and to apply the principle that was then mentioned.

It was, you may remember, to work outwards from what is inward; to display practically the fulness, the clearness, and the depth of Scripture upon all the momentous questions with which we are most deeply concerned; to show how every problem of life is there solved, how every case of conscience is answered, how all its fundamental doctrines are related to each other, some allied, some co-ordinate, some correlative, and yet how all cohere in an unity which is in itself an evidence of no little strength that that which contains teaching on the deepest subjects, thus varied and yet thus ever harmonious and consistent, is verily and in every sense the word of God.

¹ Eph. vi. 16.

The true nature of Inspiration is thus *practically* brought home to the heart. It becomes at first felt rather than proved; recognized, consciously recognized by the soul everywhere in the Holy Volume, and yet not always logically demonstrable. Still everywhere present. I will be bold to say, everywhere,—and I might further say that faithful study, with earnest prayer for illumination, will always be found to verify the truth of the statement. Take for instance five or six verses of simple Gospel narrative, descriptive it may be of some one of our Lord's miracles. Let these verses be thoroughly considered and studied, and their meaning completely realised,—and then let the devout reader be asked if he was not and is not conscious of something within them that seems strangely to distinguish them, some influence abiding and present, something hard to define, difficult to analyze, yet plain, real, and appreciable. Test this again by comparison. Let a faithful truth-seeking reader carefully read a few verses of one of St. Paul's Epistles to the Corinthians, and then read a portion of the Epistle to the same Church, written by one whose name is in the Book of Life, and whose words were for a while even counted a part of it. What would such a one tell us was the result of the comparison? Would he not say that even as the Church of Christ has judged, so his own spiritual insight leads him to judge,—and that apart from all mere literary difference, whether in words, expressions, or style, he recognizes in the

words of the one writer something that he misses in the words of the other,—an influence, a spirit, an element, something indefinable, and yet something of a nature sufficiently distinct to influence his judgment, and to leave a strangely fixed conviction of the justice of that judgment in his own heart and mind.

Scripture's testimony to itself. §. 70. When this feeling is thus awakened, when we have thus brought

Scripture home to the heart, we may wisely take a step further, and appeal to the testimony of Scripture as to the divine influence that it claims as present in its own declarations. Such testimony will now be received as it ought to be received. The heart's conviction that there *is* an influence and spirit in Scripture different, not only in degree but in kind, to that perceived, or thought to be perceived, in any other book, will now gain just the assurance that it needs and seeks. The blessed words have now avowed themselves to be what they have long been felt to be; the heart has long found them life and truth on every question, and now they bear witness of themselves. That witness now becomes all but final; conviction already deep at once becomes still deeper, and to that conviction, in some minds, nothing more remains to be added.

Testimony of the Church. § 71. There is, however, a third testimony to the Inspiration of Scripture which the poor doubting hearts of most of us still require, and which may now be most fitly

appealed to. It is a testimony to which, of late, far too little heed has been paid; a testimony that to some minds is of itself sufficient to preclude all further anxiety or enquiry. That testimony, I need not say, is the testimony of the Church. The Church, which an Apostle has declared to be the upbearing pillar and broad-based foundation of the Truth,¹—the Church, the guardian of our archives, the Church that guarantees to us their genuineness and authenticity, now adds her cumulative testimony as to the real nature of that which she has preserved. What the heart of the reader, and the Word that has been read both separately affirm, the Church re-affirms. Age after age her most faithful servants have ever declared the same truth—that in the written Word there is an influence, not always necessarily recognized by the writer, yet no less certainly present and operative in his mind,—an influence that quickened memory and enhanced discrimination,—an influence that guided in the mention of facts, and breathed and burned in the recital of them,—an influence that left the writer true to himself and his own individuality, and yet was veritably and definitely both supernatural and divine.

Value of § 72. By this method, by this three-
rightful pre- fold testimony, but most of all perhaps
possessions. by the first form of it, the testimony of
 the soul as influenced by its practical study of
 Scripture,—we may bring to the hearts of those to

¹ 1 Tim. iii. 15.

whom we minister a conviction that will keep them, by God's blessing, proof against all arguments against the Inspiration of Scripture that may be based on its difficulties or so-called discrepancies and errors. There will be a loyalty that will reject them simply and trustfully; just as trustfully as we ourselves often find ourselves rejecting testimony against the character of one whom we have always found to be faithful. A higher instinct, so to speak, forbids us to believe that faithlessness exists where we have never found it, and we obey that instinct without questioning. So too will the pre-possessed heart act in reference to the assumed errors in Scripture. It will frankly recognize the difficulty; it will own the apparent discrepancy; it will spurn all evasive modes of explanation; it will scorn all paltering with substantiated facts; it will simply leave the difficulty as a difficulty,—to be cleared up, it may be, by some unlooked for addition to our present stock of knowledge; it may be, not till we know as we are known. So the true heart will leave it; but that the so-called error is really no error, but due only to imperfect knowledge of all the facts,—that the difficulty can be cleared up and will be cleared up, either here or hereafter, it will no more be able to doubt than to doubt the truth of the holiest doctrines of the Gospels or the most fundamental articles of the Faith.

Eternity § 73. The spiritual benefit of these
of Divine rightful prepossessions of the heart,
punishment. which it should thus be our endeavour

to call up and to foster, may also further be seen in reference, not only to the mere local difficulties of Scripture, but to its deeper and more contested doctrines. Take, for instance, the anxiously debated doctrine of the eternity of Divine punishments in the case of the wicked and impenitent. How would a loyal heart deal with such a question? How would the thoughtful Christian, with just pre-possession in favour of the living truth of every declaration of Scripture, discuss and decide on a subject so momentous?

Simply thus,—he would refuse any guidance save that of Scripture. What God's word clearly affirmed he would affirm; what it denied he would deny; where it was silent he would be silent; where it permitted hope he would hope; where no such permission was extended he would forbear and adore. For example, in reference to the subject now before us, the eternity or non-eternity of Divine punishments,—while, on the one hand, he would not press overmuch such words as *αἰώριος*, or even the more explicit *αἰῶνες τῶν αἰώνων*, he would not fail, on the other, to point not only to definite declarations indescribably awful,¹ but even to modes of expression, similitudes,² reiterations,³ choice of tenses,⁴ all of startling import, all calculated to produce an amount of incidental conviction simply overwhelming. While again he would rejoice in giving the greatest amplitude of meaning to the

¹ Matth. xxv. 41, 42. ² Luke iii. 17, xvi. 23, 59; Rev. xxi. 8.

³ Mark ix. 44, 46, 48.

⁴ Observe the significant present in Mark *loc. cit.*, and in John xv. 6.

three momentous passages¹ in which the all up-gathering efficacies of the Lord's restoring love are plainly set forth, he would at the same time call most solemn attention to expressed limitations in them which practically reduce salvability to union with Christ,² and to ignore which is to beg the whole question. While lastly he would bless and praise God for the universality of several forms of expression in the book of Revelation,³ he would nevertheless say, that entrance into the heavenly city of at least some classes of sinners was denied in the most emphatic form that the flexible language of the original could supply,⁴—and further, than one sin at least there was which, if words are to have any meaning at all, was to be accounted for ever irremissible.⁵ If then asked finally to express an opinion, would not such an one say and say rightly,—that to assert that the punishment of the wicked and impenitent is terminable, is to assert that which the general teaching of Scripture appears plainly to deny, and that to hope for it is a hoping against hope for which Scripture gives no satisfactory warrant whatever, and for which, it may be added, neither reason nor the analogy of nature supply any colourable argument.⁶

*The preach-
ing of the
Personal
Word.*

§ 74. And now finally permit me to say a few words upon the second subject,—yet the subject of all subjects,

¹ 2 Cor. v. 18, 19; Col. i. 19; Eph. i. 9, 10, 11. ² See *Destiny of the Creature*, Sermon. iv. pp. 57, 85. ³ Rev. vii. 9. ⁴ Rev. xxi. 27.

⁵ Matth. xii. 32; Mark iii. 28; Luke xii. 10.

⁶ See an elaborate paper in the *Studien u. Kritiken* for 1838.

the bringing home of the Personal Word to the hearts of those to whom we minister.

If, dear brethren, loyal pre-possession in the heart will prove the best safeguard in trials and temptations with reference to the authority of the Scriptures,—if inward loyalty to the Written word will make every doubt as to its full Inspiration fall harmlessly to the ground, assuredly the presence within the heart of personal love to the Lord who redeemed us will secure it against the contagion of any form of error that the evil days in which we live may still more systematically bring among us. Love will work a conviction in the anxious heart that nothing save love can work; love will make doubt not only inoperative, but impossible.

If there be any just reason for thinking that the hearts of men will ere long be tried by doubts as to the Nicene Faith,—if the tendencies of modern thought are almost, day by day, more humanitarian in reference to our Blessed Lord, is there any more blessed work that our hand can find to do than to prepare the hearts of those committed to us against the fiery trial that would thus seem to await them. To prepare them, by bringing the Lord Jesus more home to their hearts than ever, by setting forth His changeless love, by preaching the blessed mystery of all the far-reaching issues of His atonement, by teaching that *practical* and *experimental* knowledge of Him, that is only to be obtained by living for Him as if ever near us, and

looking toward Him as if alway present,—by awakening, by every means in our power, a *personal* love towards Christ crucified. This love will add to our speculative faith such a practical force of conviction, that current doubts and insinuations will have no more effect than the boisterous winds or descending waters on the house founded on the rock.

May the illuminating Spirit of grace direct us all in this our mighty mission. May the Spirit of Christ move us to bear our part like His true servants, and to quit ourselves like men in the mighty controversy. We have varied spheres of spiritual labour, but there is and there must be only one object, as there is only one true, animating spirit,—love for Him we preach. Some of us may have to bring our Master home to the heart of the more educated and refined, some to hearts dulled by the weariness of daily care and daily struggle for daily bread. But our work is the same, nay more the same than we might think, for the diffusion of doubt is at times as mysteriously general as the strangely diffused knowledge of imminent events that we read of in the vicissitudes of eastern story. There is not one of us who may not be called upon to bear his part in the struggle against doubt and unbelief ere the fleeting days of this waning year may have mingled with the past. There is not one of us who may not have brought to his very hearthstone some one of those trials of the heart's faith that we may now think only shadowy and distant.

Conclusion. § 75. Let us be watchful then, let us be true hearted, and let us love the Lord as men love who know in whom they have trusted, and are sure that, even as He promised, He will be with His Church even unto the end. The times are anxious and trying, but let us be of good courage; they that are with us are many more than they which are against us. Yea verily could we only see as he in Dothan saw,¹ we should see, it may be, what would re-assure even the most doubting. We should see the Holy Watchers round and within the Church in all the mystery of their blessed ministrations; here gathering into happy brotherhoods, men drawn together by holy sympathies, and by love to the same Lord; there driving forth into the waste the sundered companies of those who had made the Eden of their mother-Church, as far as in them lay, a scene of disquietude and contention.

Yea we might see more. We might perchance perceive the deeper causes of the spiritual unrest that seems now pervading the whole Christian world. We might hear the louder-swelling cry of the white-robed beneath the altar; we might mark the deepening suspense of the whole travailing Creation,—all alike bearing mystic witness of a consciousness of the nearer approach of the hour for which the Church militant and triumphant utters its united and longing prayer, ‘Come,’ ‘Come.’²

¹ 2 Kings vi. 17. ² Rev. xxii. 17.

Brethren, dear brethren, in a common work of faith and love, may such thoughts quicken every heart among us. May we all love to speak more of the Coming One; may we preach Him with still deeper earnestness; may we still more frequently celebrate that feast of His love which is alike the witness and the prophecy of His return; may the watchword of the Apostolic Church be ours; may the 'Until He come' be the longed for limit of all labour, the blessed boundary of all care.

Thus living alway, as in our Master's presence here below, may we faithfully and bravely do His work, and when all is done, and He vouchsafes to call us home, may our works follow us. 'Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me to give every man according as his work shall be.'

¹ Rev. xxii. 12.

NOTE A, p. 40.

The words of Lord Eldon are as follow:—'It has been uniformly said, especially as to marriages in London, that the Clergyman cannot possibly ascertain where the parties are resident: but that is an objection, which a Court, before whom the consideration of it may come, cannot hear. The Act of Parliament has given the means of making the enquiry, and if the means provided are not sufficient, it is not a valid excuse to the Clergyman, that he could not find out when the parties were resident, or either of them. If he has used the means given to him, and was misled, he is excusable; but he can never excuse himself if no enquiry was made.'





